MARVEL®



#1 IN A TWELVE-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES

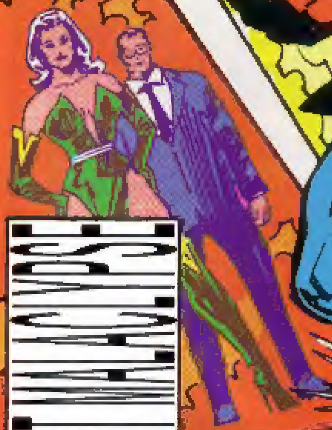
THE ETERNALS™

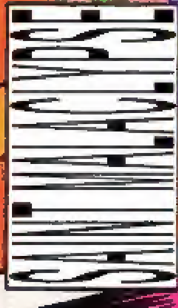
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THE BATTLE BEGINS!

DEVIANTS VERSUS THE GODS WHO WALK AMONG US!



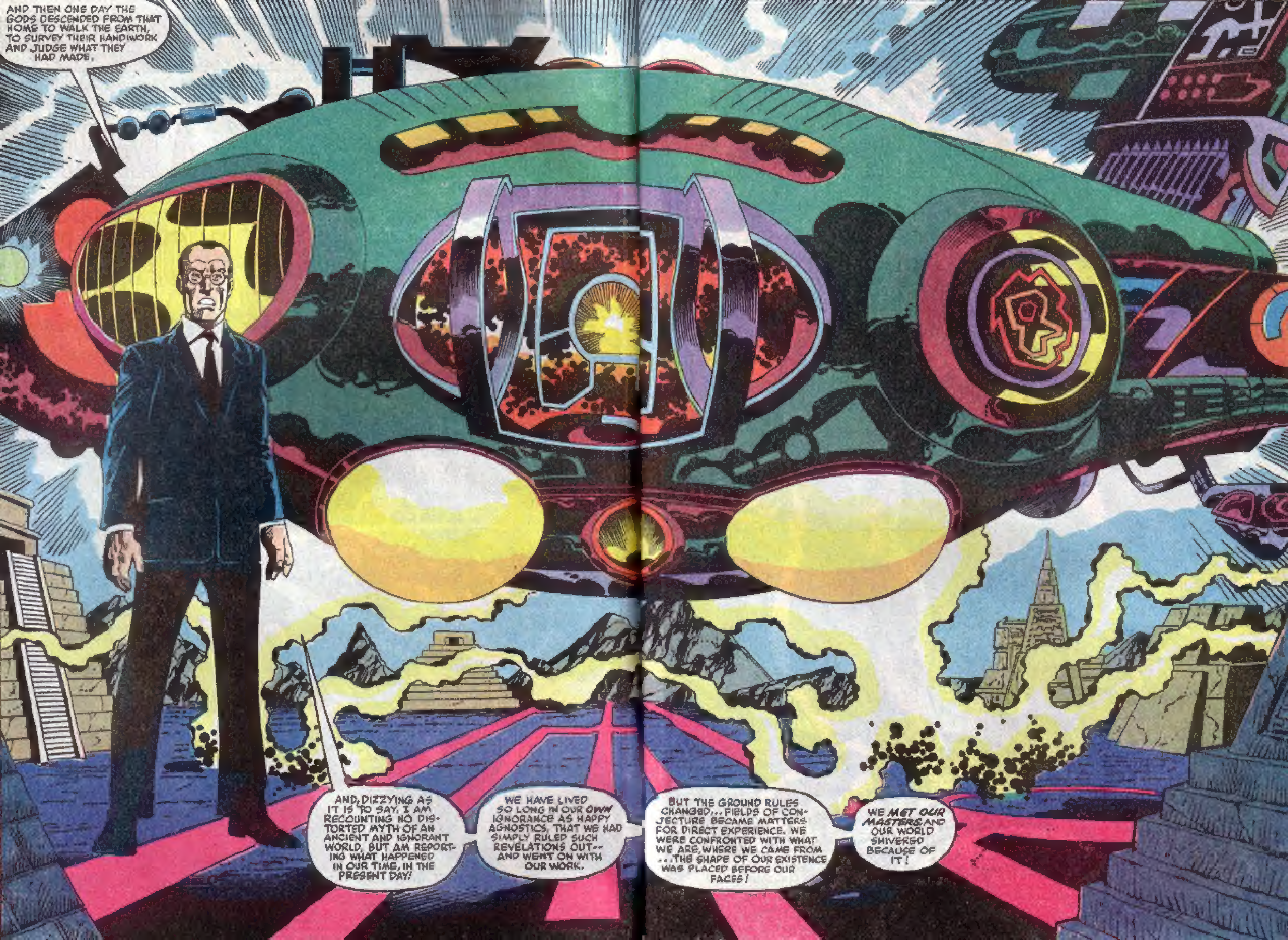


Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE ETERNALS!™

PETER B. GILLIS WRITER * SAL BUSCEMA PENCILER * AL GORDON INKER * JOE ROSEN LETTERER * G. ROUSSOS COLORIST * RALPH MACCHIO EDITOR * JIM SHOOTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

A MIRROR FOR MORTALITY!

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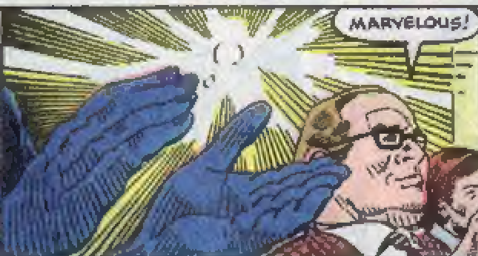

AND THEN ONE DAY THE GODS DESCENDED FROM THAT HOME TO WALK THE EARTH, TO SURVEY THEIR HANDIWORK AND JUDGE WHAT THEY HAD MADE.
AND, DIZZYING AS IT IS TO SAY, I AM RECOUNTING NO DISTORTED MYTH OF AN ANCIENT AND IGNORANT WORLD, BUT AM REPORTING WHAT HAPPENED IN OUR TIME, IN THE PRESENT DAY!
WE HAVE LIVED SO LONG IN OUR *OWN* IGNORANCE AS HAPPY AGNOSTICS, THAT WE HAD SIMPLY RULED SUCH REVELATIONS OUT-- AND WENT ON WITH OUR WORK.
BUT THE GROUND RULES CHANGED... FIELDS OF CONJECTURE BECAME MATTERS FOR DIRECT EXPERIENCE. WE WERE CONFRONTED WITH WHAT WE ARE, WHERE WE CAME FROM ...THE SHAPE OF OUR EXISTENCE WAS PLACED BEFORE OUR FACES!
WE *MET OUR MASTERS*, AND OUR WORLD SHIVERED BECAUSE OF IT!

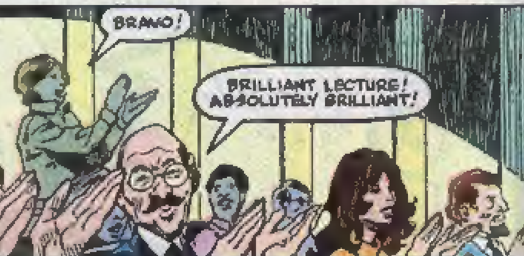


FOR THESE ARE THE CELESTIALS, WHO, IN FOUR HOSTS, CAME TO EARTH AND TAMPERED WITH THE GENETIC STRUCTURE OF SOME EARLY PRIMATES, FOSTERING TWO OFF-SHOOTS OF OUR SPECIES. LATER, THE CELESTIALS OBSERVED THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAN AND HIS BRETHREN.
THEN, THE FOURTH HOST WALKED THE EARTH BEFORE OUR EYES -- AND JUDGED US... YES, AND FOUND US WORTHY OF LIFE. IT WAS THEN THAT WE BECAME AWARE WE SHARED THIS PLANET WITH OTHER BRANCHES OF MANKIND, AS WE STOOD IN THE SHADOW OF CELESTIAL JUDGMENT.


IF THIS SOUNDS POETIC AND FAINTLY BIBLICAL--AND THEREFORE CRACKPOT, WE SHOULD BE REMINDED THAT ALL CULTURES DO NOT SHUNT THEIR HOLY BOOKS AND SEERS COMFORTABLY ASIDE.
OUR CULTURE, FOR BETTER OR WORSE, DOES--

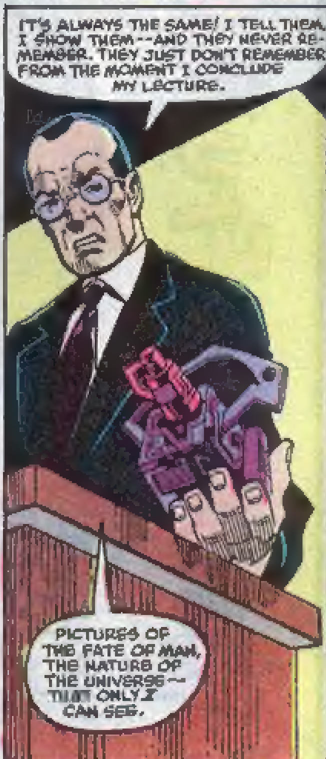

--AND THIS MAY BE WHY, WHEN CONFRONTED WITH SOMETHING WHICH BOTH DWARFS OUR LIVES AND THROWS THEM INTO SHARP RELIEF--WE, WITH ALL OUR SCIENTIFIC FEARLESSNESS-- SHUDDER, TURN AWAY, AND FORGET.
THANK YOU.


MARVELOUS!


BRAVO!
BRILLIANT LECTURE! ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT!


I'VE ALWAYS SAID THAT SAM HOLDEN IS ONE OF THE TOP MEN IN OUR DEPARTMENT--AND THIS JUST BEARS IT OUT!
I QUITE AGREE! A FIRST-CLASS ANTHROPOLOGICAL MIND--AND A DELIVERY THAT BRINGS THE TOPIC TO LIFE!


THE TOPIC--
YES, UMM, NOW WHAT WAS THE TOPIC--?


IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME! I TELL THEM, I SHOW THEM--AND THEY NEVER REMEMBER. THEY JUST DON'T REMEMBER FROM THE MOMENT I CONCLUDE MY LECTURE.
PICTURES OF THE FATE OF MAN, THE NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE--THAT ONLY I CAN SEE.

YOU MEAN, ONLY YOU *AND* ME *AND* MY UNCLES AND COUSINS AND BROTHERS-IN-LAW ETERNALS CAN SEE. FACE IT. FOR SOME REASON, THE CELESTIALS LEFT YOUR MEMORY OF THEIR VISIT INTACT--AND IN GOOD COMPANY.

SERSI! I'M SORRY--I WAS TALKING TO MYSELF AGAIN.

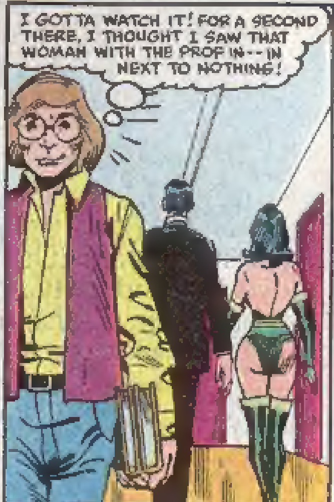




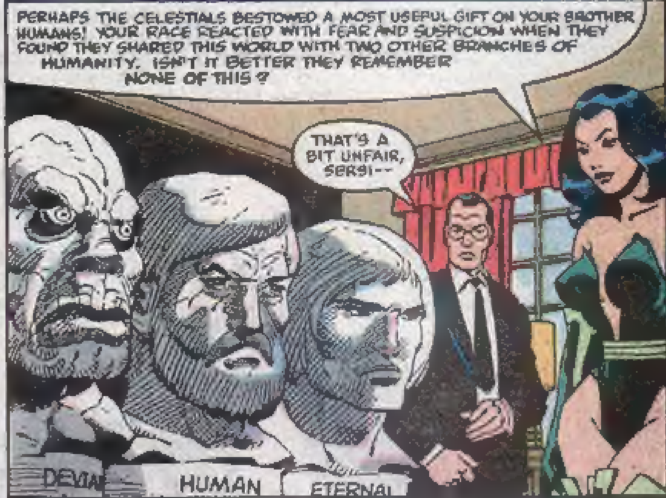


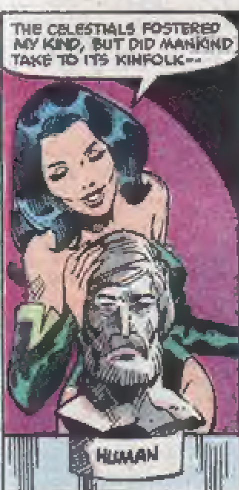







I WAS READY TO ENDURE HOSTILITY FROM MY COLLE[redacted] ABUSE--ANYTHING BUT THIS!
I'D CALL THEM 'BLIND' AS AN INSULT --BUT IT SEEMS TO BE LITERALLY TRUE! I AM THE ONLY HUMAN WHO REMEMBERS THE CELESTIALS' COMINGS.


PERHAPS THE CELESTIALS BESTOWED A MOST USEFUL GIFT ON YOUR BROTHER HUMANS! YOUR RACE REACTED WITH FEAR AND SUSPICION WHEN THEY FOUND THEY SHARED THIS WORLD WITH TWO OTHER BRANCHES OF HUMANITY. ISN'T IT BETTER THEY REMEMBER NONE OF THIS?
THAT'S A BIT UNFAIR, SERSI--
DEVIANT
HUMAN
ETERNAL


THE CELESTIALS FOSTERED MY KIND, BUT DID MANKIND TAKE TO ITS KINFOLK--
HUMAN


--THE ETERNALS, EVEN THOUGH WE MEANT NO HARM? NOT ON YOUR LIFE!
ETERNAL


NOR WERE YOU ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE DEVIANTS--
DEVIANT

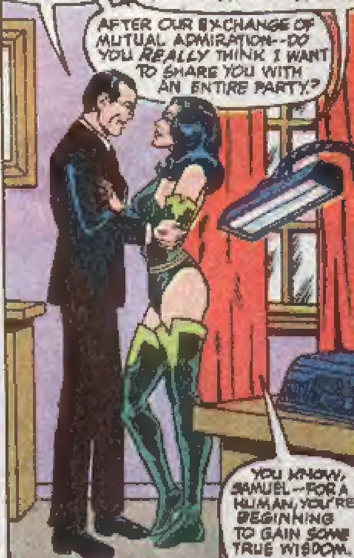

--THOUGH THAT'S MORE UNDERSTANDABLE. AFTER ALL, THOSE GENETICALLY UNSTABLE HOOLIGANS DID OPPRESS YOUR RACE IN THE PAST FROM TIME TO TIME--


"--AND IN THE MOST [redacted] OF YOUR LEGENDS OF FOUL THINGS UNDER THE EARTH ARE MEMORIES OF THESE BRUTES!"*
*FOR MORE DETAILS ON THE HISTORY OF THE DEVIANTS, HUMANS AND ETERNALS, SEE OUR SPECIAL FEATURE IN THE BACK OF THIS ISSUE-- HISTORIAN RALPH


WELL, I KNOW ONE HUMAN AT LEAST WHO IS ENTHUSIASTIC--NOT TO SAY CRAZY--ABOUT A CERTAIN ETERNAL--!
WHY SAMUEL--!

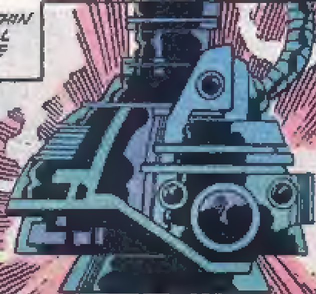


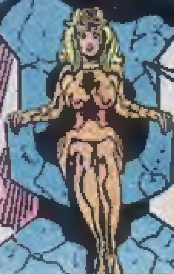


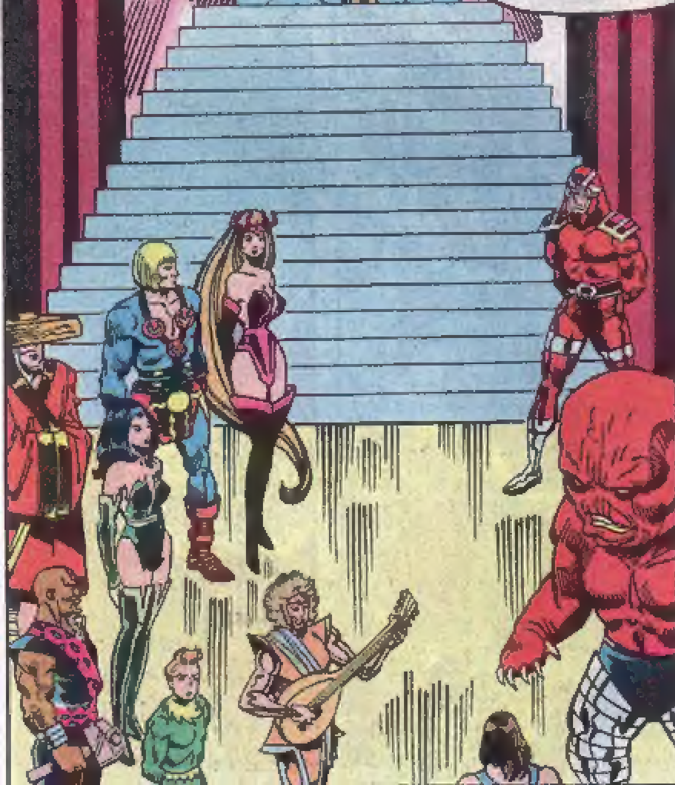


ON A GREEK MOUNTAINTOP, THERE IS A MAGNIFICENT CITY CALLED OLYMPIA, HOME OF THE FEW REMAINING EARTH-BOUND ETERNALS.

ONCE IT TEEMED WITH THOSE MAJESTIC BEINGS. NOW IT IS MOSTLY SILENT--WITH FEW LIVING DENIZENS AND MANY GHOSTS---!


AND IT SEEMS WITHIN THE GREAT CENTRAL HALL ALONE, THERE IS LIFE--!
SHE IS CALLED THENA, AND TODAY SHE SITS IN A PLACE WHERE ONLY HER FATHER SAT BEFORE.


WITH THE DEATH OF MY FATHER ZURAS, LEADER OF US ETERNALS, AND THE DEPARTURE OF REVERED VALKIN TO THE DEPTHS OF SPACE WITH SO MANY OF OUR KIND, THERE IS SOMETHING THAT MUST BE DONE... A RITUAL ORDAINED BY ZURAS IN THE EVENT OF HIS DEATH.
I AM PLEASED YOU COULD BE WITH ME AT THIS MOMENT, COUSINS.



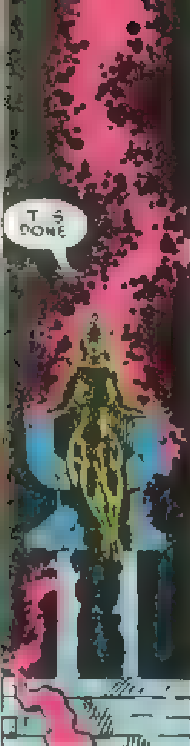

NOW LET THERE BE SILENCE IN THE GREAT HALL--
--AND LET THE CEREMONY BEGIN!

LET THE COMPACT BE FORGED! I, ZURAS, IN THIS TESTAMENT, DECREE THAT THE ONE WHO SITS IN THE *ETERNAL SEAT* SHALL SUCCEED ME AS LEADER OF THE ETERNALS OF EARTH!

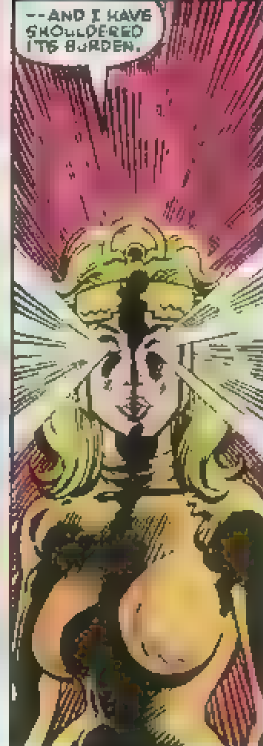
LET THE ONE WHO SITS IN THE SEAT OF KRONOS, OF THE BROTHERS A'LARS AND ZURAS ASSUME THE MANTLE OF POWER!

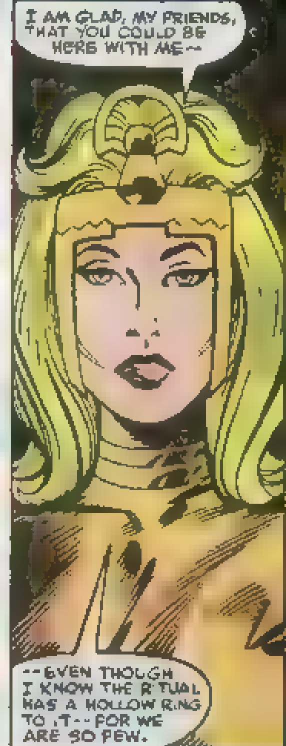
LET NO ONE OPPOSE THIS, FOR IT IS MY WILL!

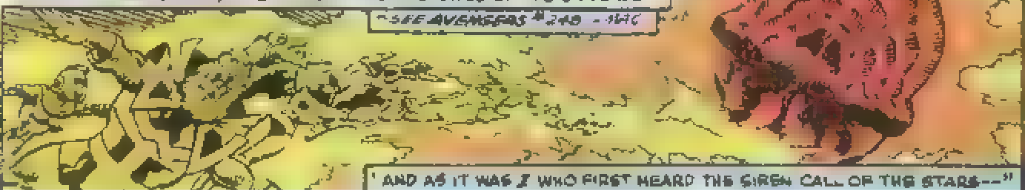
LET THIS ONE REIGN, RULE, GUIDE, AND SERVE AS FIRST AMONG EQUALS UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE SPACE GODS!

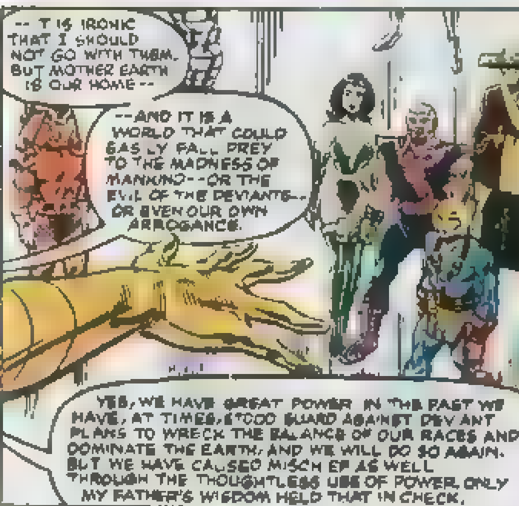

IT IS DONE

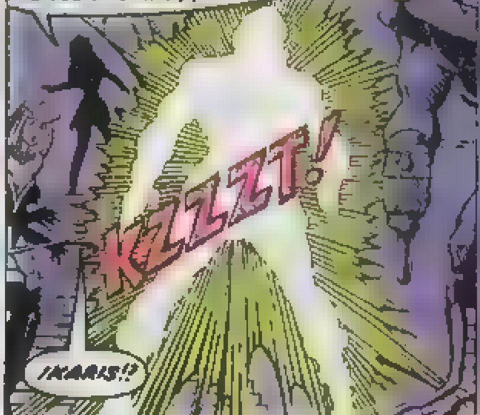

THE POWER HAS BEEN PASSED ON, INTO ME--

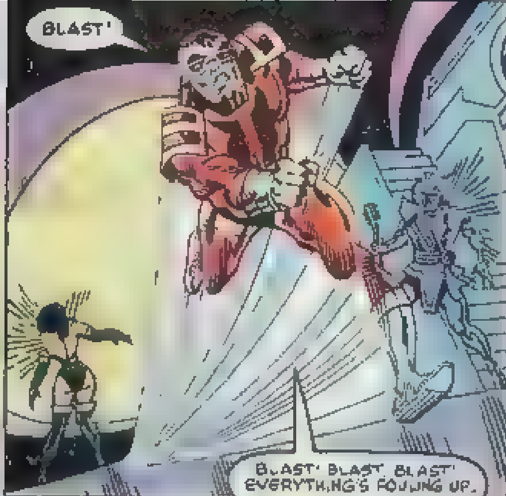

--AND I HAVE SHOULDERED ITS BURDEN.

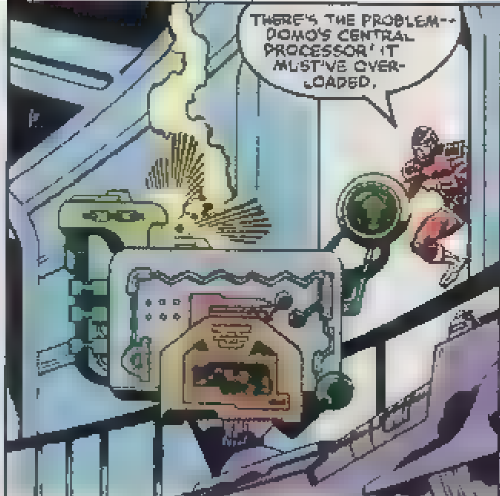

I AM GLAD, MY FRIENDS, THAT YOU COULD BE HERE WITH ME--
--EVEN THOUGH I KNOW THE RITUAL HAS A HOLLOW RING TO IT--FOR WE ARE SO FEW.


"FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE ETERNALS HAVE FORMED THE UNI-MIND AND LEFT EARTH, TO CONFRONT THE MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE"*
*SEE AVENGERS #246 --
"AND AS IT WAS I WHO FIRST HEARD THE SIREN CALL OF THE STARS--"

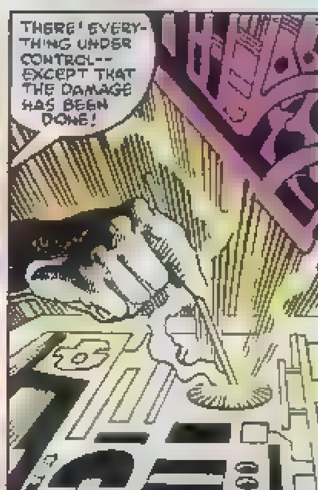

--IT IS IRONIC THAT I SHOULD NOT GO WITH THEM. BUT MOTHER EARTH IS OUR HOME--
--AND IT IS A WORLD THAT COULD EASILY FALL PREY TO THE MADNESS OF MANKIND--OR THE EVIL OF THE DEVIANTS--OR EVEN OUR OWN ARROGANCE.
YES, WE HAVE GREAT POWER. IN THE PAST WE HAVE, AT TIMES, STOOD GUARD AGAINST DEVIANT PLANS TO WRECK THE BALANCE OF OUR RACES AND DOMINATE THE EARTH, AND WE WILL DO SO AGAIN. BUT WE HAVE CAUSED MISCHIEF AS WELL THROUGH THE THOUGHTLESS USE OF POWER. ONLY MY FATHER'S WISDOM HELD THAT IN CHECK.


I DO NOT HAVE ZURAS'S WISDOM, BUT WE OWE IT TO THIS WORLD'S INHABITANTS TO STAY AS GUARDIANS OF A SORT. I ASK YOU, THEN, TO GIVE ME YOUR-- WHAT??
KZZZT!
IKARIS!?

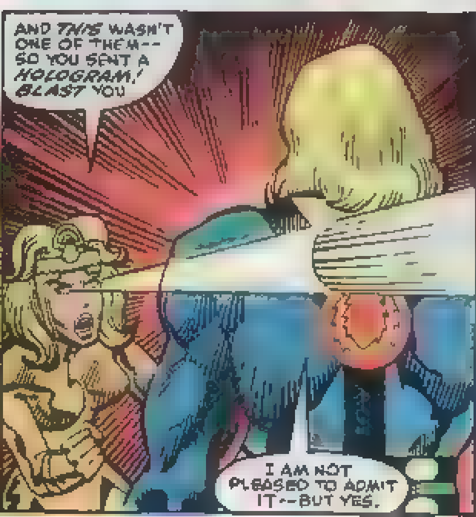

BLAST!
BLAST! BLAST! BLAST! EVERYTHING'S FOULING UP.

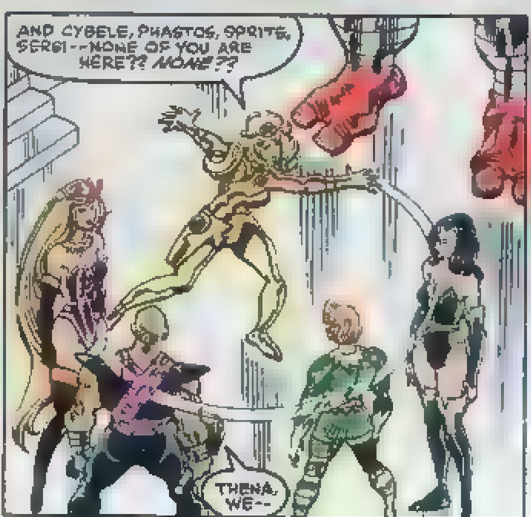

THERE'S THE PROBLEM-- DOMO'S CENTRAL PROCESSOR! IT MUST'VE OVER-LOADED.

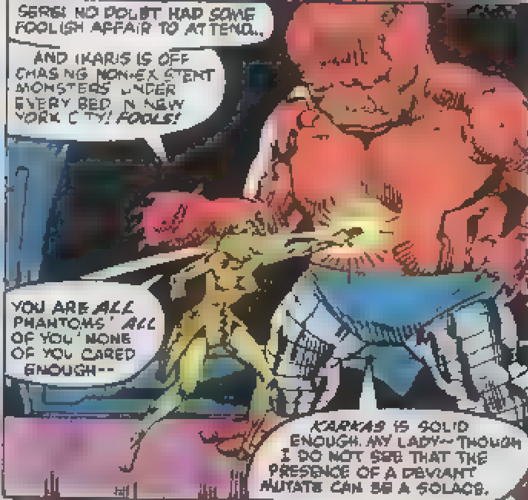
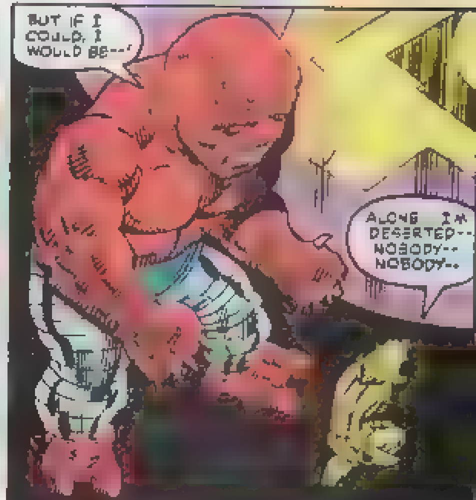

HE MUST'VE FORGOTTEN TO OVERHAUL IT BEFORE HE LEFT WITH THE OTHERS!

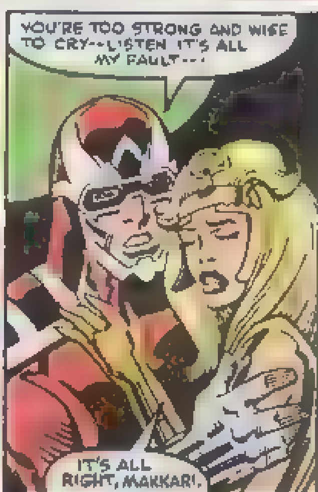
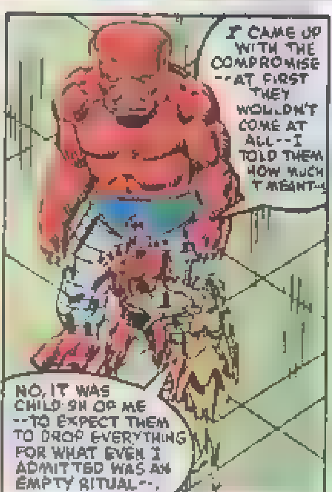
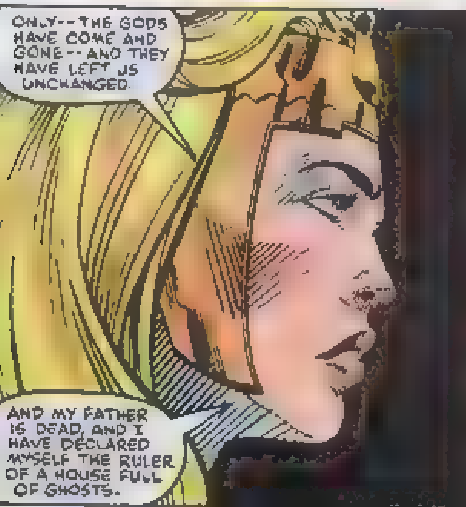
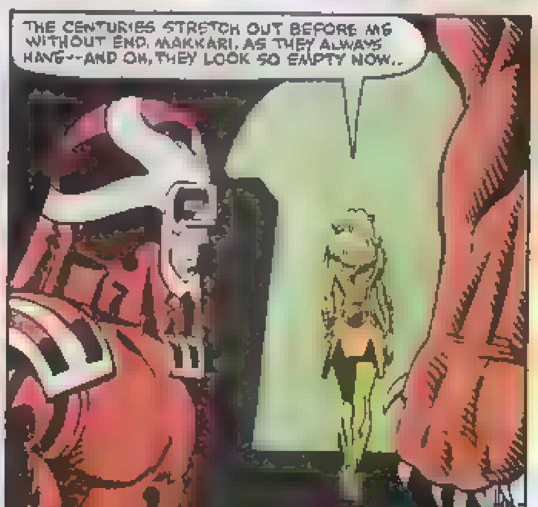

THERE! EVERY-THING UNDER CONTROL-- EXCEPT THAT THE DAMAGE HAS BEEN DONE!

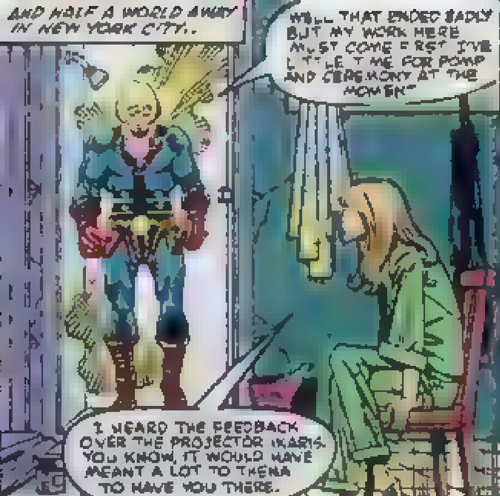

SO! YOU COULDN'T BE *BOTHERED* TO BE HERE FOR THE MOST IMPORTANT DAY OF MY LIFE IN *PERSON*, COULD YOU, IKARIS?
I HAVE MY OBLIGATIONS TO FULFILL, THENA.
THENA. PLEASE--

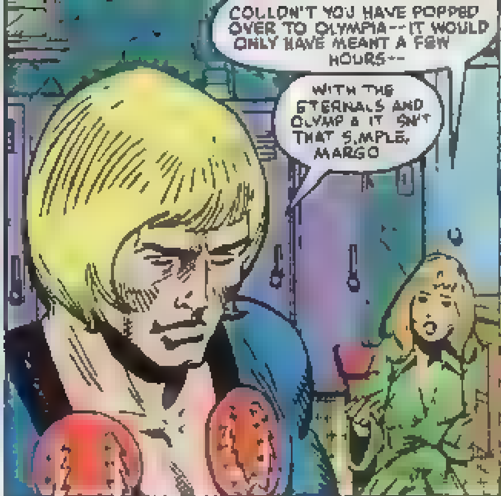

AND *THIS* WASN'T ONE OF THEM-- SO YOU SENT A *HOLOGRAM!* *BLAST* YOU
I AM NOT PLEASED TO ADMIT IT--BUT YES.


AND CYBELE, PHASTOS, SPRITE, SERSI--NONE OF YOU ARE HERE?? *NONE*??
THENA, WE--


SERSI NO DOUBT HAD SOME FOOLISH AFFAIR TO ATTEND..
AND IKARIS IS OFF CHASING NON-EXISTENT MONSTERS UNDER EVERY BED IN NEW YORK CITY! FOOLS!
YOU ARE ALL PHANTOMS! ALL OF YOU! NONE OF YOU CARED ENOUGH--
KARKAS IS SOLID ENOUGH, MY LADY--THOUGH I DO NOT SEE THAT THE PRESENCE OF A DEVIANT MUTATE CAN BE A SOLACE.

BUT IF I COULD, I WOULD BE--!
ALONE. I'M DESERTED-- NOBODY-- NOBODY--

THENA-- PLEASE DON'T CRY-- PLEASE-- I'M SORRY--!

YOU'RE TOO STRONG AND WISE TO CRY--LISTEN IT'S ALL MY FAULT--!
IT'S ALL RIGHT, MAKKARI.

I CAME UP WITH THE COMPROMISE --AT FIRST THEY WOULDN'T COME AT ALL--I TOLD THEM HOW MUCH IT MEANT--
NO, IT WAS CHILDISH OF ME --TO EXPECT THEM TO DROP EVERYTHING FOR WHAT EVEN I ADMITTED WAS AN EMPTY RITUAL--.

ONLY--THE GODS HAVE COME AND GONE--AND THEY HAVE LEFT US UNCHANGED.
AND MY FATHER IS DEAD, AND I HAVE DECLARED MYSELF THE RULER OF A HOUSE FULL OF GHOSTS.

THE CENTURIES STRETCH OUT BEFORE ME WITHOUT END, MAKKARI, AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE--AND OH, THEY LOOK SO EMPTY NOW..


AND HALF A WORLD AWAY IN NEW YORK CITY..
WELL THAT ENDED SADLY BUT MY WORK HERE MUST COME FIRST. I'VE LITTLE TIME FOR POMP AND CEREMONY AT THE MOMENT
I HEARD THE FEEDBACK OVER THE PROJECTOR IKARIS. YOU KNOW, IT WOULD HAVE MEANT A LOT TO THENA TO HAVE YOU THERE.

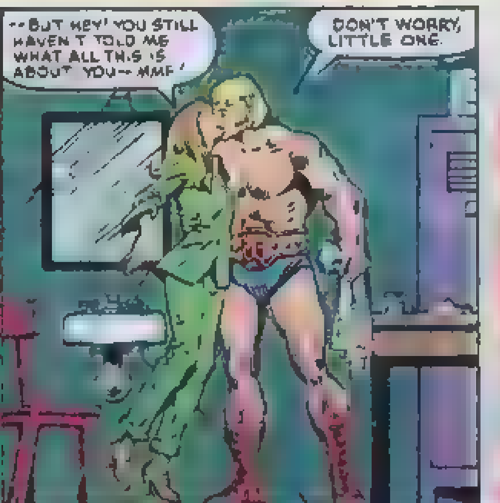

COULDN'T YOU HAVE POPPED OVER TO OLYMPIA--IT WOULD ONLY HAVE MEANT A FEW HOURS--
WITH THE ETERNALS AND OLYMPIA IT ISN'T THAT SIMPLE, MARGO


FOR IN A CITY OF IMMORTALS, WHAT SEEMS LIKE HOURS COULD BE DAYS--


--OR MONTHS OR YEARS, TIME ITSELF CAN GET LOST--


--AS WELL AS PURPOSE AND I MUST FULFILL MINE.

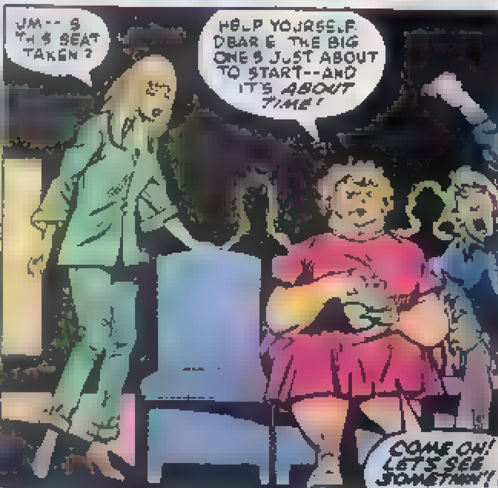

FOR WHAT I'VE FOUND HERE REQUIRES IMMEDIATE--AND DRASTIC--MEASURES
DRASTIC--I'LL NEVER GET USED TO THE WAY YOU DO THAT--

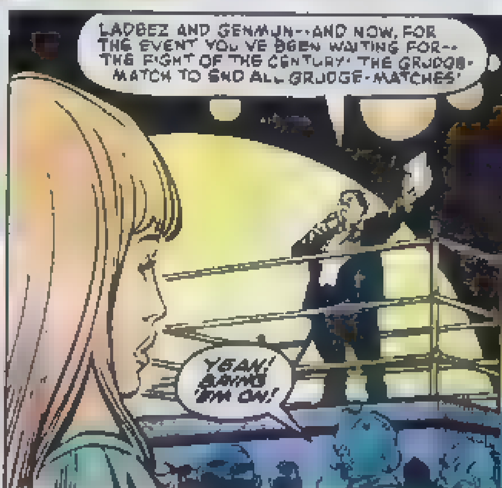

--BUT HEY! YOU STILL HAVEN'T TOLD ME WHAT ALL THIS IS ABOUT YOU-- MMF!
DON'T WORRY, LITTLE ONE.

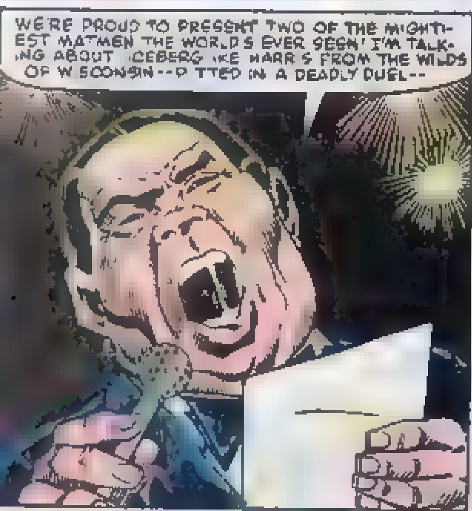

I'LL TURN THE HOLO-TRANSMITTER BACK INTO A REAL SHOWER STALL, AND THEN BE OUT. YOU GO FIND YOURSELF A SEAT.


OKAY, BUT BE CA--OH NEVER MIND

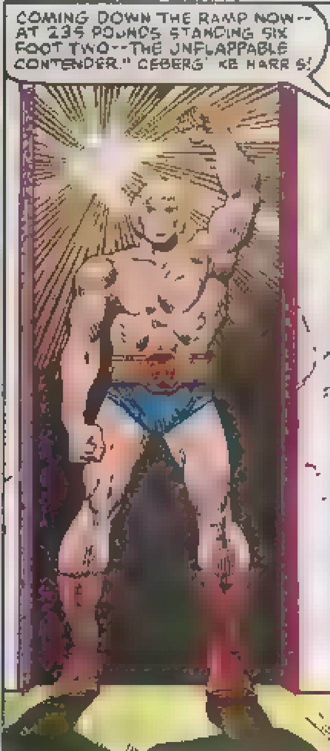

AS THE DAUGHTER OF ARCHAEOLOGIST DANIEL DAMIAN, MARGO HAS BEEN ALL OVER THE WORLD--AND, WHEN IKARIS JOINED HER FATHER'S EXPEDITION IN DISGUISE TO EXPLORE SOME INCAN RUINS (WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE THE LANDING SITE FOR THE CELESTIALS), SHE EXPERIENCED THE LOVE OF THAT ENIGMATIC ETERNAL--TOWERING SPACE GODS--CITIES OF DEVIANTS--AND THE UNI-MIND.
BUT ALL THIS SCARCELY PREPARES HER FOR THE AUDIENCE GATHERED FOR AN EVENING OF PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING.

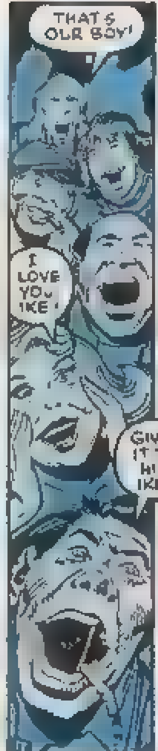

UM--IS THIS SEAT TAKEN?
HELP YOURSELF, DEARIE. THE BIG ONE'S JUST ABOUT TO START--AND IT'S ABOUT TIME!
COME ON! LET'S SEE SOMETHIN'!


LADIES AND GENTLEMEN--AND NOW, FOR THE EVENT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR--THE FIGHT OF THE CENTURY! THE GRUDGE-MATCH TO END ALL GRUDGE-MATCHES!
YEAH! BRING 'EM ON!


WE'RE PROUD TO PRESENT TWO OF THE MIGHTIEST MATMEN THE WORLD'S EVER SEEN! I'M TALKING ABOUT ICEBERG IKE HARRIS FROM THE WILDS OF WISCONSIN--PITTED IN A DEADLY DUEL--


--AGAINST THE TENTH WONDER OF THE WORLD--ENIGMO, THE MASKED MANGLER FROM THE GARDEN SPOT OF THE NATION, NEW JERSEY!
WOTTA BUM!
KILL THE GOON!

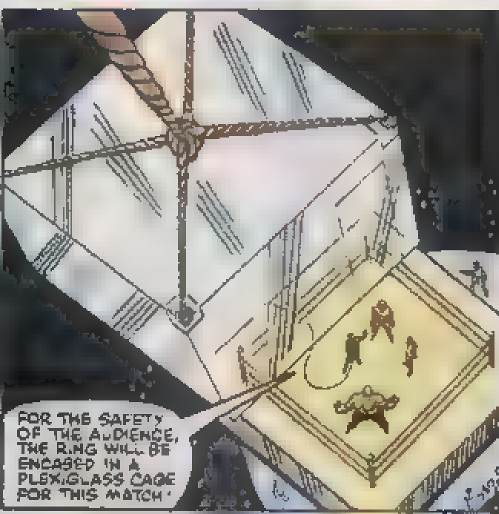

COMING DOWN THE RAMP NOW--AT 235 POUNDS STANDING SIX FOOT TWO--THE UNFLAPPABLE CONTENDER." CEBERG' KE HARR S!

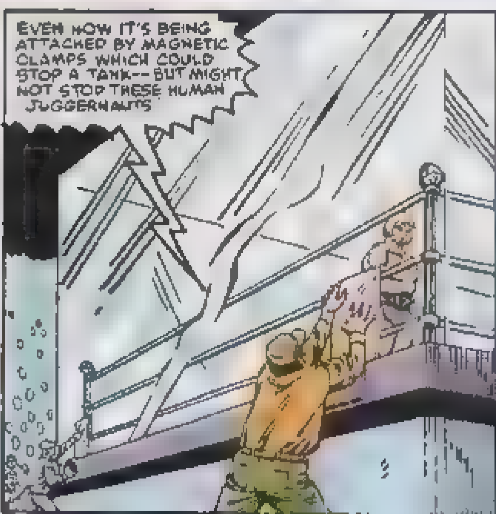

THAT'S OUR BOY!
I LOVE YOU IKE!
GIVE IT TO HIM IKE


AND FROM THE OPPOS TE SIDE--AT 335 POUNDS AND SIX FOOT SEVEN, THE NEW JERSEY N GHTMARE *ENIGMO!*
LEMME AT 'IM! I'LL KILL 'IM!


BOO!
YOU'LL GET YOURS, YOU BUM


LADEEZ AND GENMUN BECAUSE OF THE *VICIOUS BLOOD FEUD* BETWEEN THESE TWO GRAPPLERS, WE'RE FORCED TO TAKE *EXTRAORDINARY MEASURES!*


FOR THE SAFETY OF THE AUDIENCE, THE RING WILL BE ENCASED IN A PLEXIGLASS CAGE FOR THIS MATCH!


EVEN NOW IT'S BEING ATTACHED BY MAGNETIC CLAMPS WHICH COULD STOP A TANK--BUT MIGHT NOT STOP THESE HUMAN JUGGERNAUTS!

SO GET READY, LADEEZ AND GENMUN-- FOR MAT ACTION LIKE YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE!

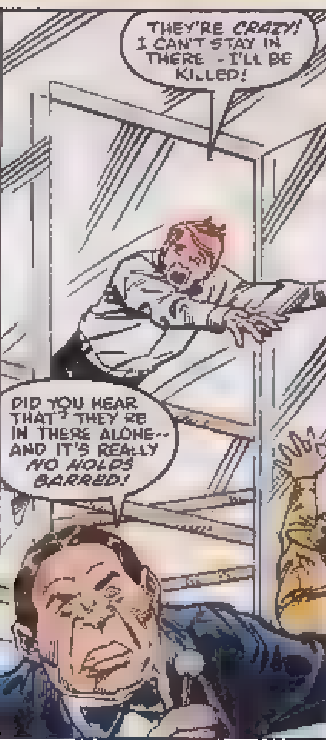
YOU'RE DEAD MEAT, YA PENCIL-NECK, HARRIS!

EASY, BOYS, I WANT A CLEAN FIGHT AND A FAIR ONE, UNDERSTAND? WHEN THE BELL RINGS--

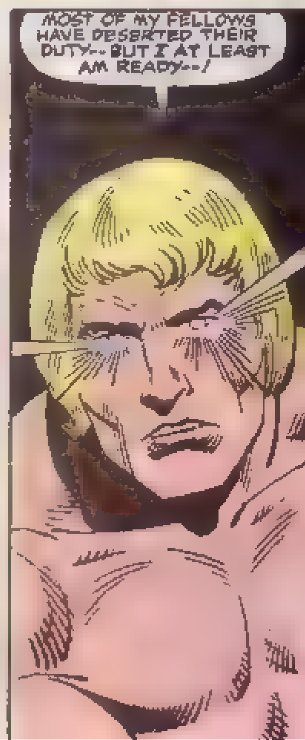
YOU CAN'T HIDE BEHIND THIS PANSY, HARRIS! I'LL *MURDER* YA!

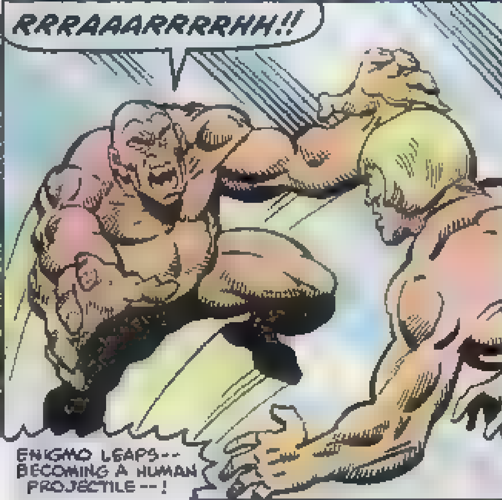
HEY!

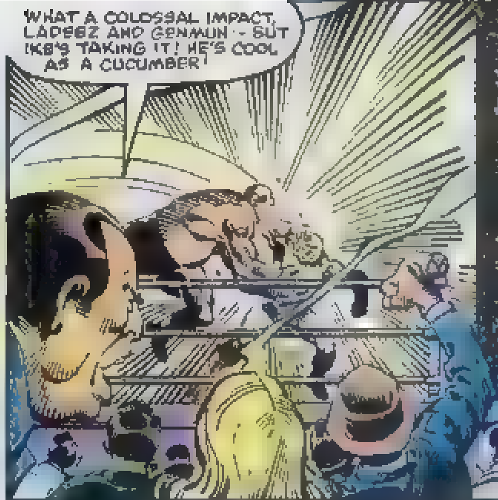
ALL RIGHT, IF THAT'S THE WAY IT'S GOING TO BE--!

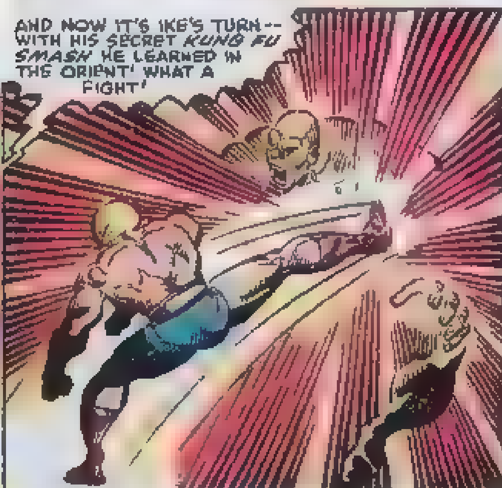


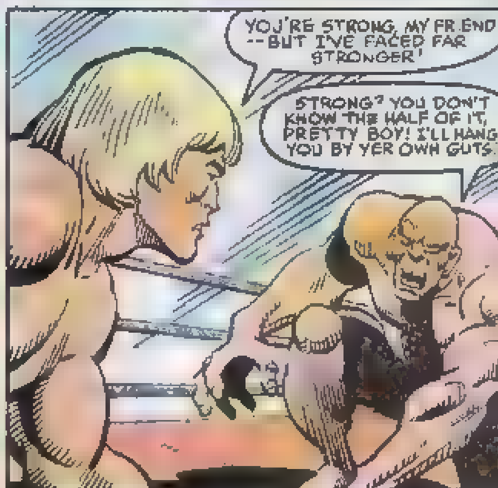


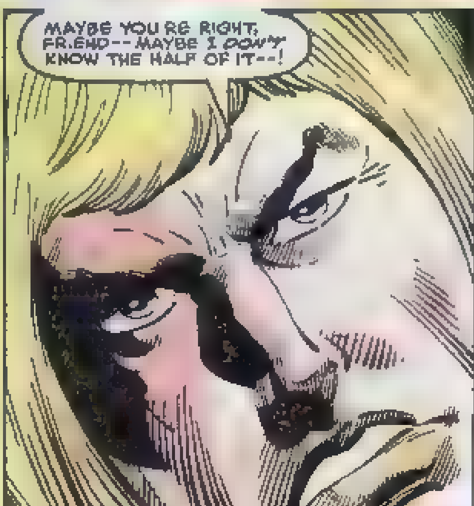


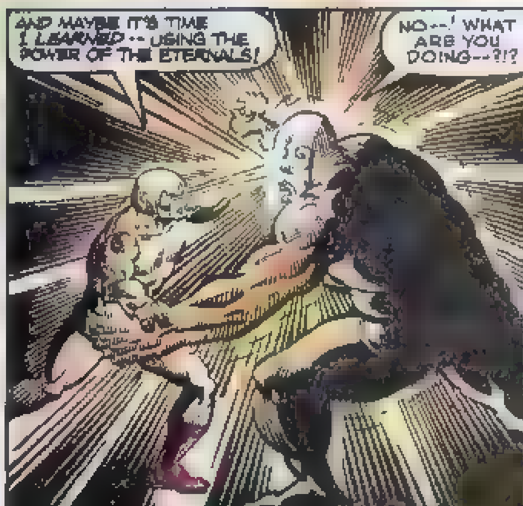

RRRAAARRRRHH!!
ENIGMO LEAPS-- BECOMING A HUMAN PROJECTILE--!


WHAT A COLOSSAL IMPACT, LADEEZ AND GENMUN -- BUT IKE'S TAKING IT! HE'S COOL AS A CUCUMBER!


AND NOW IT'S IKE'S TURN-- WITH HIS SECRET KUNG FU SMASH HE LEARNED IN THE ORIENT! WHAT A FIGHT!


YOU'RE STRONG, MY FRIEND --BUT I'VE FACED FAR STRONGER!
STRONG? YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT, PRETTY BOY! I'LL HANG YOU BY YER OWN GUTS!


MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, FRIEND-- MAYBE I DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT--!


AND MAYBE IT'S TIME I LEARNED -- USING THE POWER OF THE ETERNALS!
NO--! WHAT ARE YOU DOING--?!?

YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD WORM YOUR WAY INTO HUMAN SOCIETY UNDETECTED -- BUT YOU DIDN'T THINK I WOULD STOOP TO YOUR LEVEL -- AND UNDO YOUR DISGUISE YOU UNDER-EST MATE ETERNAL INGENUITY!

NOW YOU CAN NO LONGER H DE--AND PLOT DESTRUCTION IN SECRET!

AND A FAT LOT OF GOOD IT WILL DO YOU, ETERNAL! FOR YOU FACE *CATAPHRAX* THE MIGHTY--

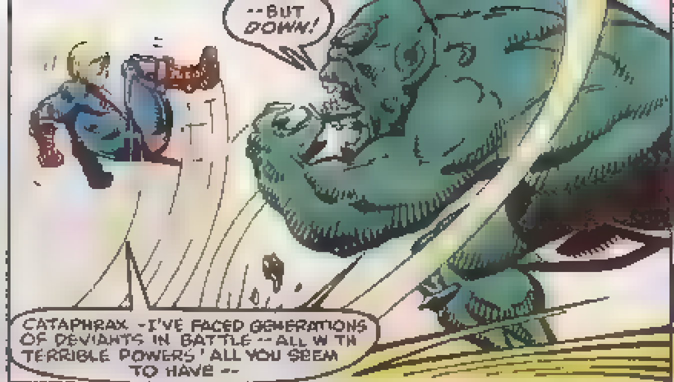
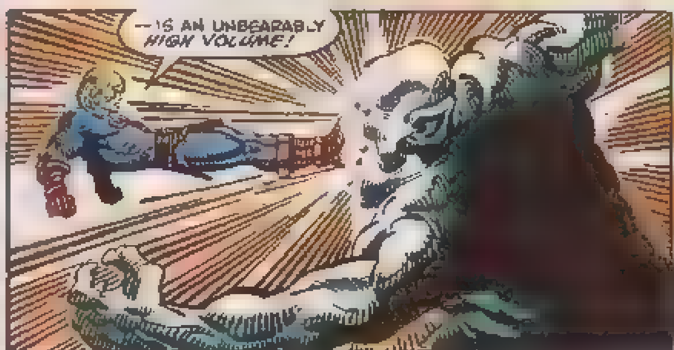
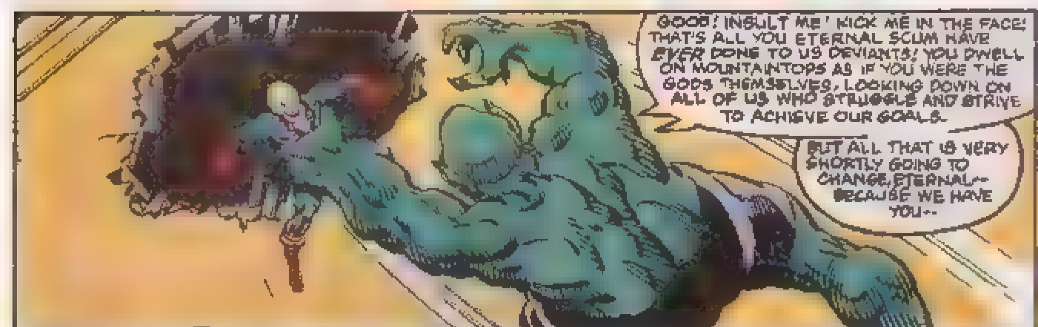
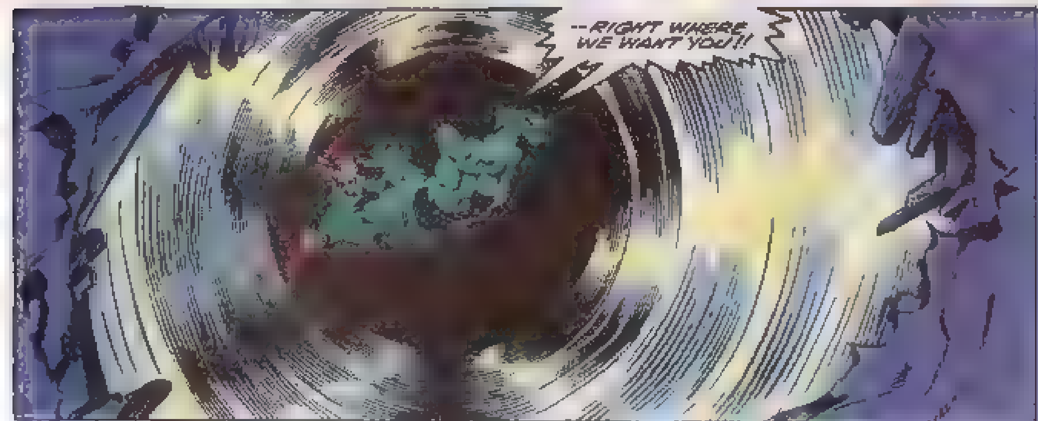
--AND HE SHALL GRIND YOU INTO IMMORTAL PULP!

THE FIRST IS SECONDARY, DEVIANT! WHAT MATTERS IS, I CAN PROVE TO MY FELLOW ETERNALS THAT YOU MOVE AGAINST HUMANITY--AND *HUMANITY* KNOWS YOU ARE *MONSTERS* IN THEIR MIDST!

MONSTERS? THIS GLASS CAGE IS MORE THAN A GIMM CK--IT MAKES THE AUDIENCE SEE WHAT WE WISH THEM TO SEE. AND ALL I WISH THEM TO SEE--

--IS YER BRAINS SPLATTERED ON THE MAT!

HARRIS IS CAUTIOUS --AND WHO WOULDN'T BE AFTER THAT LAST BLOW?


ACTUALLY, I SHOULD THANK YOU THEN--FOR ALLOWING ME TO DEFEAT YOU IN SOMETHING OTHER THAN THOSE LUDICROUS SHORTS!
VERY GOOD, IKARIS--ALL DRESSED UP NOW, BUT WITH NO PLACE TO GO--

--BUT DOWN!
CATAPHRAX -I'VE FACED GENERATIONS OF DEVIANTS IN BATTLE--ALL WITH TERRIBLE POWERS! ALL YOU SEEM TO HAVE --

--IS AN UNBEARABLY HIGH VOLUME!

GOOD! INSULT ME! KICK ME IN THE FACE! THAT'S ALL YOU ETERNAL SCUM HAVE EVER DONE TO US DEVIANTS! YOU DWELL ON MOUNTAINTOPS AS IF YOU WERE THE GODS THEMSELVES, LOOKING DOWN ON ALL OF US WHO STRUGGLE AND STRIVE TO ACHIEVE OUR GOALS.
BUT ALL THAT IS VERY SHORTLY GOING TO CHANGE, ETERNAL-- BECAUSE WE HAVE YOU--

--RIGHT WHERE WE WANT YOU!!

THIS IS *INCREDIBLE*, LADEEZ AND GENMUH --HARRIS AND ENIGMO HAVE *BROKEN THROUGH THE CANVAS* AND I CAN SEE THEM NOW --YES, THEY'RE STILL GRAPPLING ON THE FLOOR BENEATH!

WHAT A BOUT!!

THERE-- THERE'S SOMETHING *WRONG* HERE! THIS ISN'T WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN!

I'VE GOT TO GET DOWN TO THE BASEMENT --THIS IS *CRAZY*!

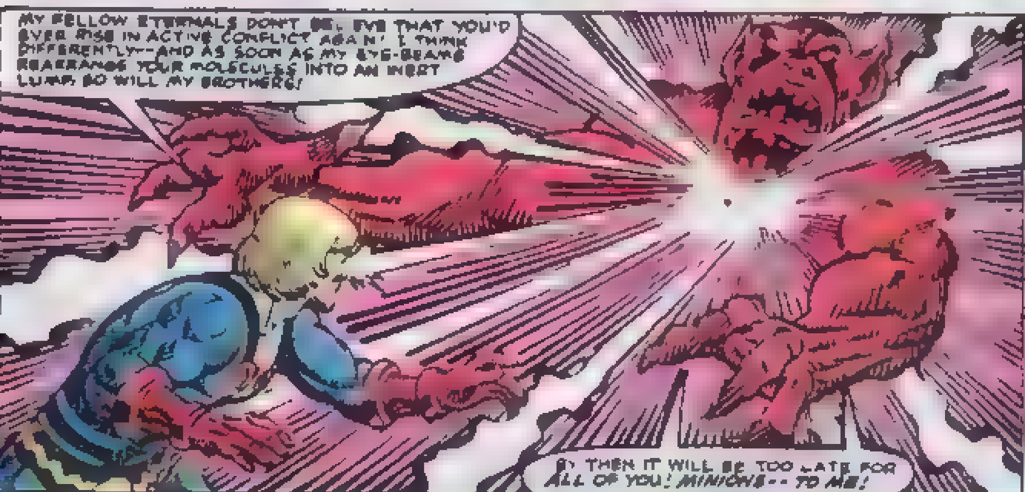
WHAT'S GOING ON??

BUT IKARIS AND CRYPTHRAX HAVE FALLEN DEEPER THAN THE BASEMENT--FAR, FAR DEEPER--INTO A DEVIANT STRONGHOLD DEEP IN THE CRUST OF THE EARTH!

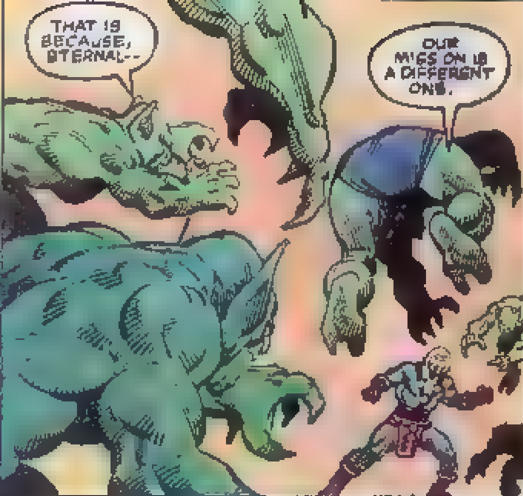
CAN YOU FEEL THE PRESSURE--THE HEAT--SMELL THE STENCH, IKARIS? THIS IS THE *DEVIANTS'* DOMAIN! THE DOMAIN WE *SUFFER* [redacted] IN BITTERNESS --AND ALL BECAUSE OF YOU ETERNALS!

YOU LIE! IT WAS THE *CELESTIALS* WHO FORCED YOU INTO THE DEPTHS--AND THEY DID IT BECAUSE YOU SOUGHT TO UPSET BALANCE OF THE THREE BRANCHES OF MANKIND--TO RULE AND OPPRESS!

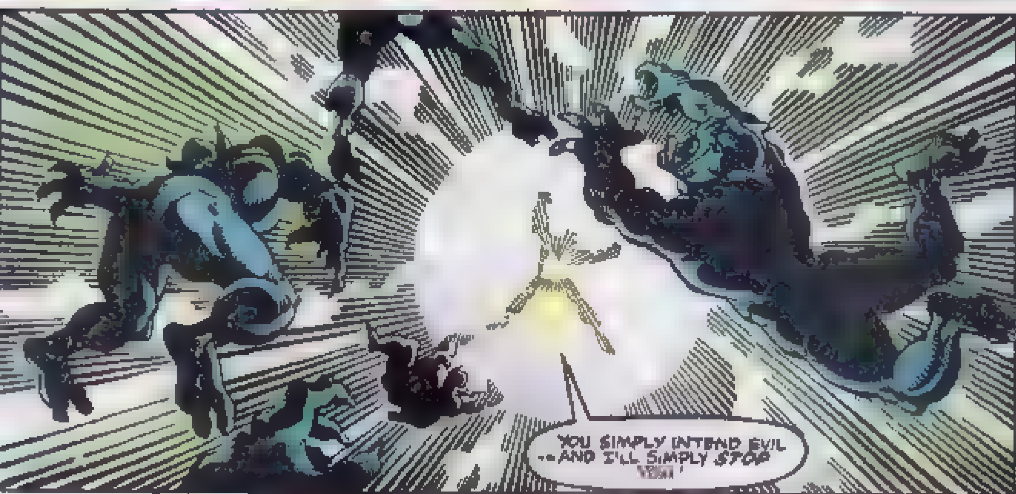

BALANCE? YOU CALL IT A BALANCE WHEN ONE BRANCH IS GIVEN IMMORTALITY--WHILE ANOTHER IS CURSED TO BE A RACE OF GENETICALLY UNSTABLE MONSTERS? THAT SUITS YOU, PERHAPS--BUT SOON THERE WILL BE A NEW BALANCE--ONE OF OUR OWN CHOOSING... DEVIANT CHOOSING!
YOU AS MUCH AS CONFESS THAT YOU INTEND TO BRING WAR TO THE ENTIRE PLANET!

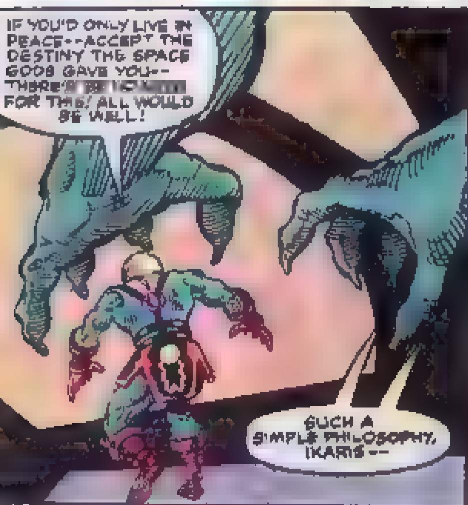

MY FELLOW ETERNALS DON'T BELIEVE THAT YOU'D EVER RISE IN ACTIVE CONFLICT AGAIN! I THINK DIFFERENTLY--AND AS SOON AS MY EYE-BEAMS REARRANGE YOUR MOLECULES INTO AN INERT LUMP, SO WILL MY BROTHERS!
BY THEN IT WILL BE TOO LATE FOR ALL OF YOU! MINIONS--TO ME!

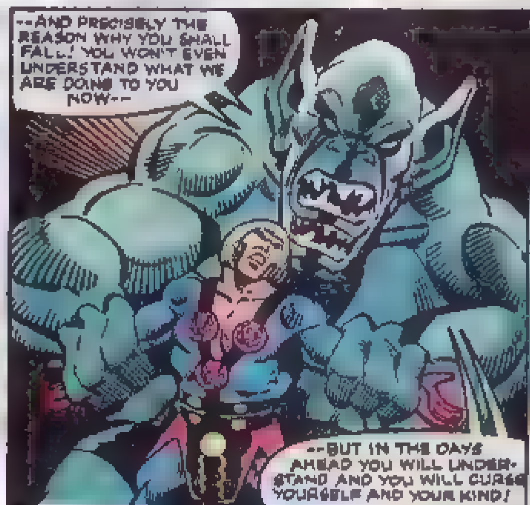

AND WITH ONE STROKE--WE END THE ETERNAL DOMINATION OF EARTH!
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THESE BEASTS WILL STOP ME WHEN YOU COULDN'T?


THAT IS BECAUSE, ETERNAL--
OUR MISSION IS A DIFFERENT ONE.


WE WILL HOLD YOU-- AND TEAR YOUR SECRET FROM YOU!
SECRETS--I HAVE NO SECRETS--!


YOU SIMPLY INTEND EVIL --AND I'LL SIMPLY STOP [redacted]!


IF YOU'D ONLY LIVE IN PEACE--ACCEPT THE DESTINY THE SPACE GODS GAVE YOU-- THERE'S [redacted] FOR THIS! ALL WOULD BE WELL!
SUCH A SIMPLE PHILOSOPHY, IKARIS--


--AND PRECISELY THE REASON WHY YOU SHALL FALL! YOU WON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND WHAT WE ARE DOING TO YOU NOW--
--BUT IN THE DAYS AHEAD YOU WILL UNDERSTAND AND YOU WILL CURSE YOURSELF AND YOUR KIND!

MINIONS--BRING THE MACHINE! HURRY!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THIS CAN'T HARM ME--!

NOW! ACTIVATE

KRMMMMMMM

IT IS WORKING! IT IS DONE!

WHAT--I'M UNTOUCHED? I DIDN'T FEEL A THING!

NOW, WHILE HE IS BEWILDERED--RUN! RUN TO THE MODULE!

RUN! RUN

COME BACK HERE! WHAT GAME ARE YOU PLAYING? I WANT SOME ANSWERS--!

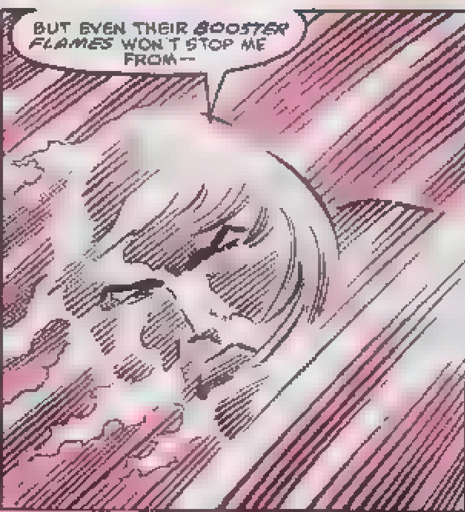
YOUR OWN PUZZLEMENT SLOWS YOU DOWN, IKARIS! WE HAD COUNTED ON THAT! LIKE ALL OF YOUR KIND, YOU DABBLE IN WAR WHEN IT SUITS YOU, THOUGH YOU KNOW LITTLE OF OUR TRUE METHODS OR STRATAGEMS

MARK OUR MEETING INDELIBLY ON YOUR MIND, ETERNAL. IT IS THE TURNING POINT IN OUR RACES' INTERTWINED HISTORIES. YOU HAVE GIVEN UP YOUR SECRET, AND SO THIS IS THE BEGINNING... THE BEGINNING OF YOUR END!

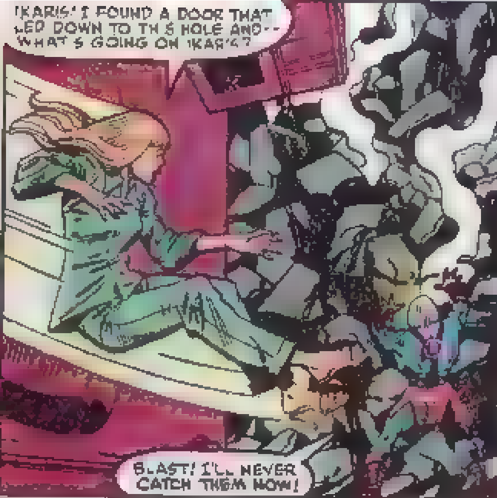
DO YOU HEAR ME? I'M GOING TO *BEAT* SOME ANSWERS OUT OF--
GOOD-BYE, SIMPLETON.

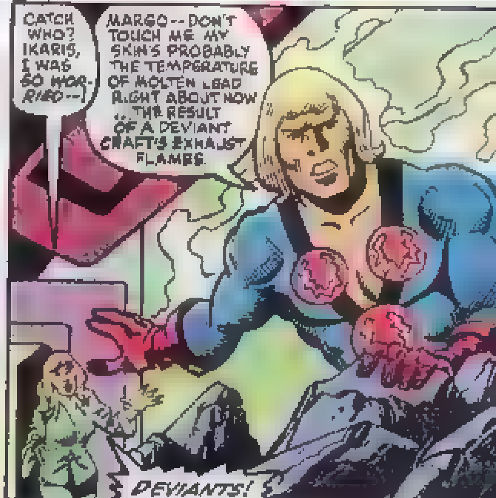


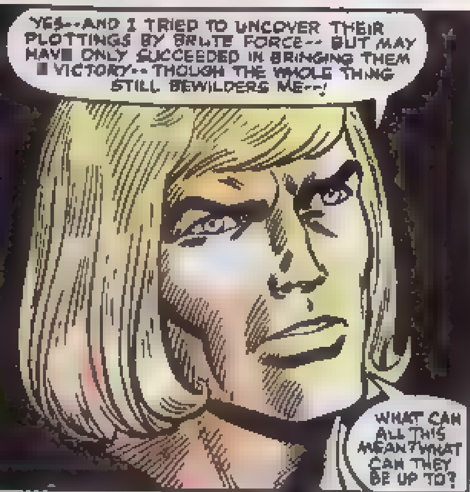


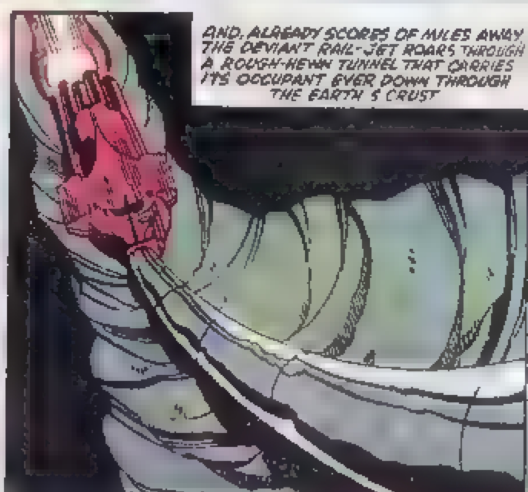





IKARIS! I FOUND A DOOR THAT LED DOWN TO TH S HOLE AND-- WHAT'S GOING ON IKARIS?
BLAST! I'LL NEVER CATCH THEM NOW!


CATCH WHO? IKARIS, I WAS SO WORRIED--!
MARGO--DON'T TOUCH ME MY SKIN'S PROBABLY THE TEMPERATURE OF MOLTEN LEAD RIGHT ABOUT NOW ..THE RESULT OF A DEVIANT CRAFT'S EXHAUST FLAMES.
DEVIANTS!


YES--AND I TRIED TO UNCOVER THEIR PLOTTINGS BY BRUTE FORCE-- BUT MAY HAVE ONLY SUCCEEDED IN BRINGING THEM VICTORY--THOUGH THE WHOLE THING STILL BEWILDERS ME--!
WHAT CAN ALL THIS MEAN? WHAT CAN THEY BE UP TO?


AND, ALREADY SCORES OF MILES AWAY THE DEVIANT RAIL-JET ROARS THROUGH A ROUGH-HEWN TUNNEL THAT CARRIES ITS OCCUPANT EVER DOWN THROUGH THE EARTH'S CRUST


THE ETERNAL OL' HE FELL FOR IT COMPLETELY!


HE REALLY FELT THAT I WANTED MERELY TO BEAT HIM IN WRESTLING!
INSTEAD I BRING HOME A GREAT TRIUMPH! HOW THEY WILL HONOR ME

TRANSECTING THE CURVATURE OF THE EARTH THE SHIP ATTAINS ENORMOUS VELOCI-TIES AS ITS JETS AUGMENT GRAVITY ITSELF!

ON AND ON IT PLUNGES. THOUSANDS OF MILES, BENEATH CONTINENTS AND OCEANS ALIKE--

--UNTIL IT BEGINS TO BRAKE AS IT NEARS ITS DESTINATION.

THE CITY BROODS BENEATH THE FLOOR OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN, AS IT HAS FOR UNTOLD AGES.

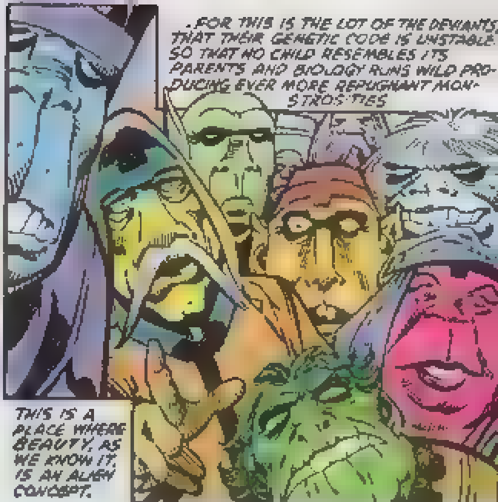
IT HAS OUTLASTED ALL THE MANY WORKS OF HUMANKIND--AND THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE SPACE GODS THEMSELVES AS WELL.

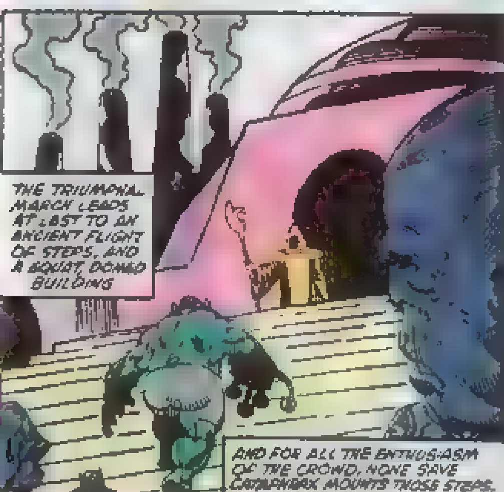
IT IS THE CITY OF LEMURIA--AND IT AWAITS THE ARRIVAL OF A CHAMPION!

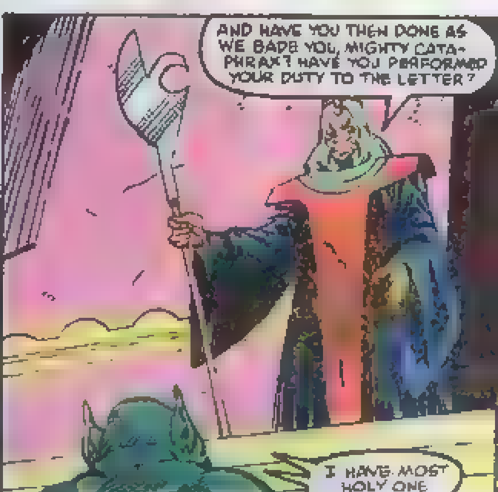

HEAR ME CITIZENS OF LEMURIA! CATAPHRAX HAS RETURNED--
--AND HE RETURNS IN UTTER TRIUMPH! HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN HIS PERILOUS TASK! LET HIM HEAR WHAT GREETING LEMURIA GIVES ITS HEROES!

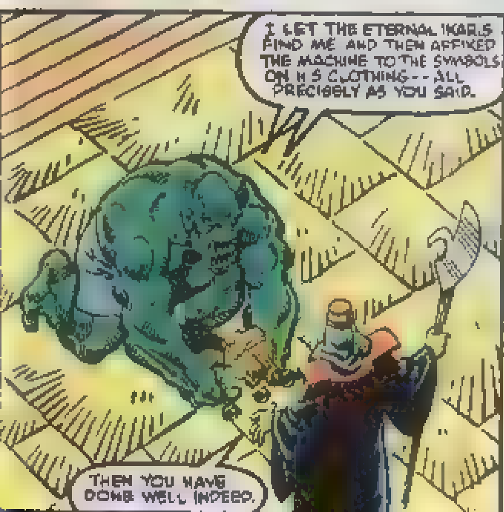
A THOUSAND DIFFERENT VOICES CHEER HIM, A THOUSAND DIFFERENT SHAPES WAVE AND EXULT...

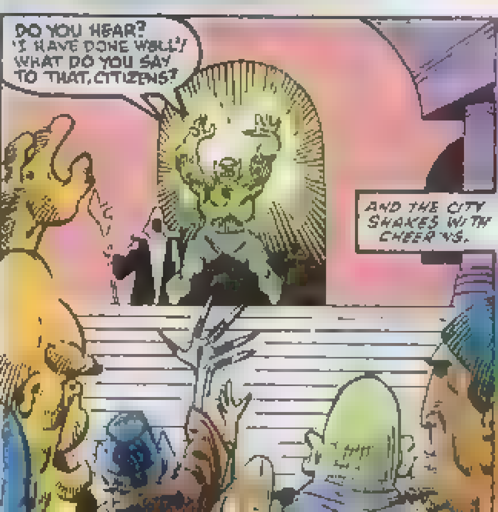


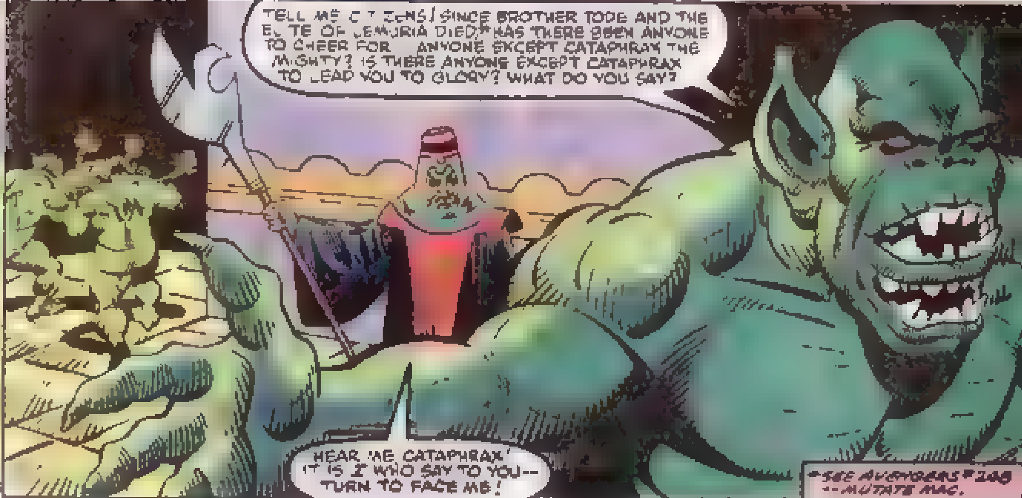











TELL ME C T ZENS! SINCE BROTHER TODE AND THE EL TE OF LEMURIA DIED,* HAS THERE BEEN ANYONE TO CHEER FOR ... ANYONE EXCEPT CATAPHRAX THE MIGHTY? IS THERE ANYONE EXCEPT CATAPHRAX TO LEAD YOU TO GLORY? WHAT DO YOU SAY?
HEAR ME CATAPHRAX! IT IS I WHO SAY TO YOU-- TURN TO FACE ME!
*SEE AVENGERS #248 --MUTATE MAC.

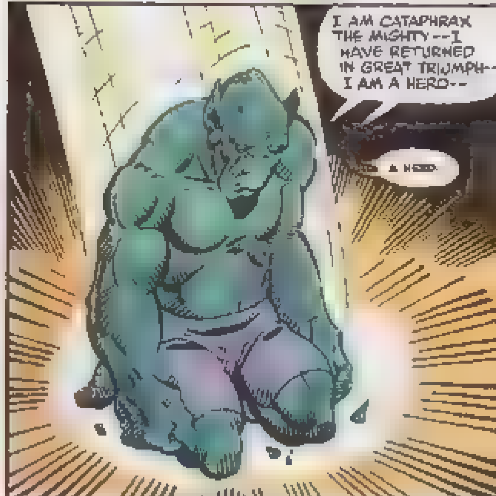

BY YOUR COMMAND, HOLY ONE.
THEN KNOW YOU THIS. YOU HAVE BEEN FOUND TO BE GENETICALLY UNCLEAN AND ARE CONSIGNED TO THE FLAME-PITS.


NO! TH S CAN T BE! AFTER ALL I VE DONE? HOW CAN TH S POSSIBLY BE TRUE?
THE WORDS OF A PR EST ARE NOT D SPUTED, CATAPHRAX.

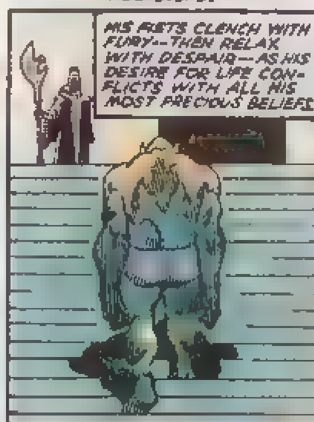

I KNOW--BUT WHY? WHY?
YOUR DEEDS ARE GREAT --BUT THEY ARE NOT IN YOUR GENETIC CODE. IT IS THAT WHICH WE MUST ERADICATE. YOU HAVE PERFORMED A SERVICE AND ARE NOW A BURDEN


NO! IS THIS MY REWARD?? C T'ZENS-- DO I DESERVE TO DIE? DO I??

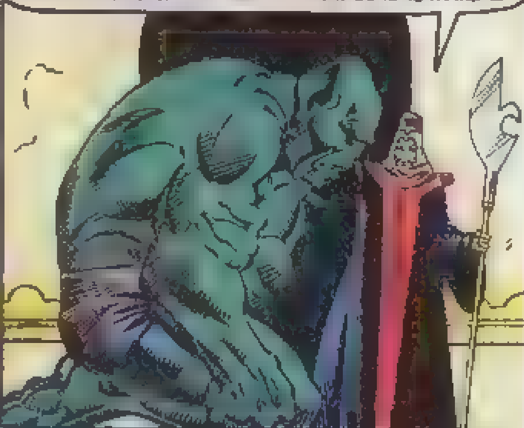

CITIZENS! YOU CHEERED ME! I AM YOUR HERO! YOUR HERO! CHEER FOR ME-- SAVE ME--!
BUT THERE IS SILENCE--SAVE FOR A WHISPER OF FEET SHUF-FLING BACKWARDS.


I AM CATAPHRAX THE MIGHTY--I HAVE RETURNED IN GREAT TRIUMPH--I AM A HERO--
A HERO

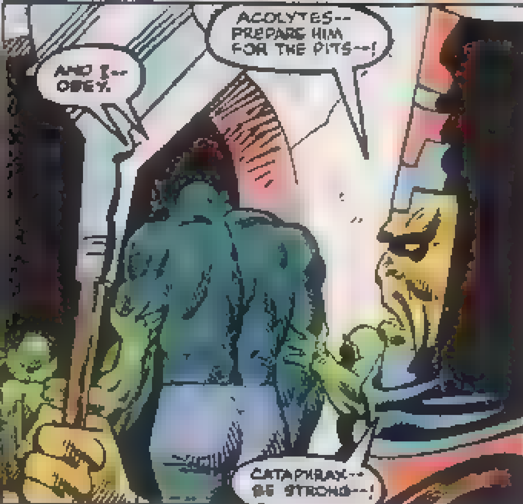

AND HE TURNS TOWARDS THE STEPS ONCE MORE--AND AGAIN, NO ONE SEEKS TO MOUNT THOSE STEPS SAVE HE--!

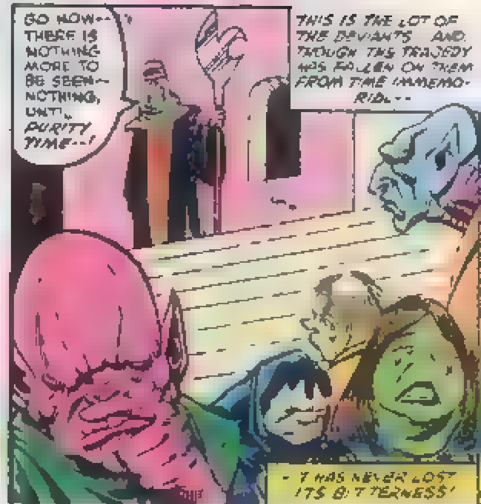

AND IN ALL LEMURIA, THERE IS ONLY THE SOUND OF ONE SET OF FOOTSTEPS.
HIS FISTS CLENCH WITH FURY--THEN RELAX WITH DESPAIR--AS HIS DESIRE FOR LIFE CON-FLICTS WITH ALL HIS MOST PRECIOUS BELIEFS.

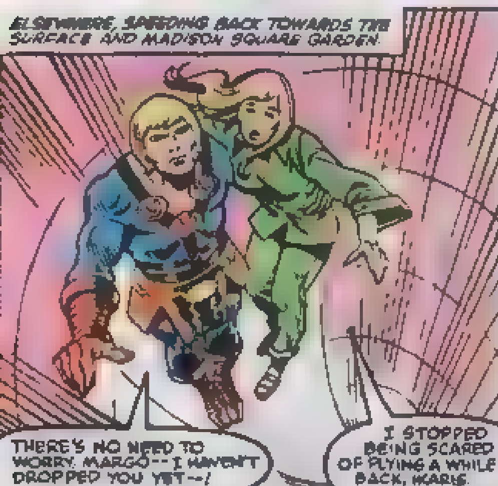

I HAVE DONE MY DUTY AND MORE! MY BODY HAS BEEN A GOOD TOOL FOR OUR RACE. I HAVE KEPT MY TRUST!
TELL ME WHY I MUST DIE, HOLY ONE!

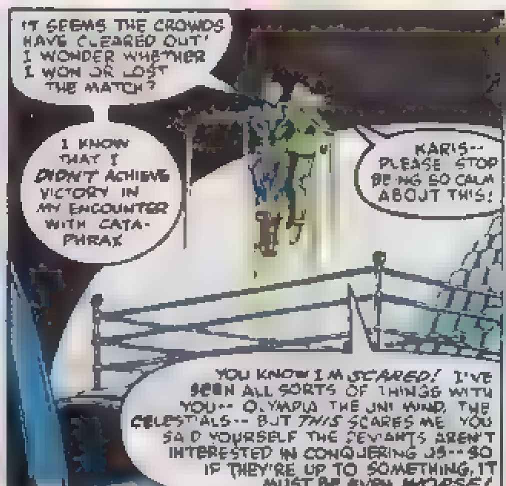

YOUR DEEDS HAVE BEEN GREAT, MIGHTY CATAPHRAX, AND SHALL BE REMEMBERED--BUT IT IS WHAT YOU ARE, NOT WHAT YOU DO THAT MUST BE DESTROYED--LEST THE RACE OF DEVIANTS STRAY TOO FAR IN THEIR GENETIC MAKE-UP.


YOUR TRAGEDY IS THE TRAGEDY OF ALL OUR RACE, CATAPHRAX--DEVIANT CHILD--SON OF THE GODS--!

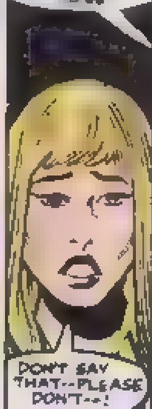

ACOLYTES-- PREPARE HIM FOR THE PITS--!
AND I-- OBEY.
CATAPHRAX-- BE STRONG--!


GO NOW-- THERE IS NOTHING MORE TO BE SEEN-- NOTHING, UNTIL PURITY TIME--!
THIS IS THE LOT OF THE DEVIANTS. AND THOUGH THE TRAGEDY HAS FALLEN ON THEM FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL--
--IT HAS NEVER LOST ITS BITTERNESS!

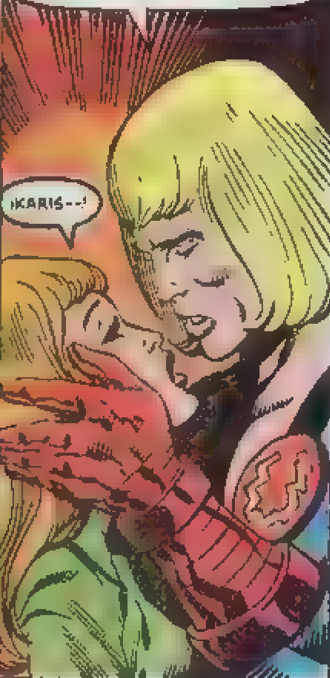

ELSEWHERE, SPEEDING BACK TOWARDS THE SURFACE AND MADISON SQUARE GARDEN.
THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY, MARGO-- I HAVEN'T DROPPED YOU YET--!
I STOPPED BEING SCARED OF FLYING A WHILE BACK, IKARIS.

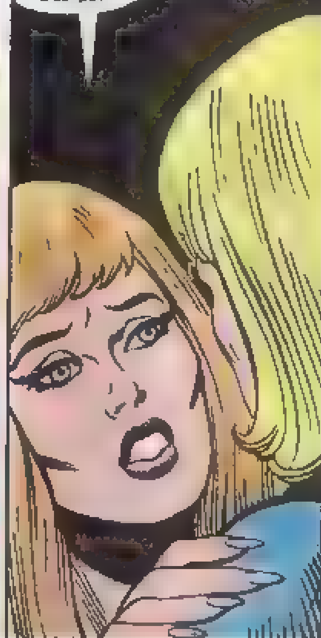

IT SEEMS THE CROWDS HAVE CLEARED OUT! I WONDER WHETHER I WON OR LOST THE MATCH?
I KNOW THAT I DIDN'T ACHIEVE VICTORY IN MY ENCOUNTER WITH CATAPHRAX.
IKARIS-- PLEASE STOP BEING SO CALM ABOUT THIS!
YOU KNOW I'M SCARED! I'VE SEEN ALL SORTS OF THINGS WITH YOU-- OLYMPIA, THE UNI-MIND, THE CELESTIALS-- BUT THIS SCARES ME. YOU SAID YOURSELF THE DEVIANTS AREN'T INTERESTED IN CONQUERING US-- SO IF THEY'RE UP TO SOMETHING, IT MUST BE EVEN WORSE!


TALK TO ME! WHAT "VICTORY" ARE YOU SPEAKING ABOUT? HOW COULD THEY HAVE WON WHEN YOU'RE STILL ALIVE AND YOU CHASED THEM AWAY? AND WHAT COULD THEY POSSIBLY BE DOING THAT WOULD MAKE THEM THINK THEY COULD CONQUER THE ETERNALS?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT THEY WERE CONFIDENT, MARGO. THE DEVIANTS THRIVE ON CONFLICT. WE ETERNALS ON PEACE. OUR ENEMY MUST BE MET HEAD-ON IN THE STRUGGLE TO COME OR WE WILL ALL BECOME VICTIMS.
STRUGGLE TO COME?
I MAY HAVE BEGUN A WAR--PERHAPS THE FINAL WAR. IT IS NOT A BURDEN I WELCOME.


I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT MY BROTHER ETERNALS WILL JOIN ME IN THE BATTLES TO BE.
DON'T SAY THAT--PLEASE DON'T--!


I DON'T NEED ANY MORE DANGER OR MENACE. AND I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU-- SEE YOU--
MARGO


I'M EQUAL TO THE TASK, MARGO. I'LL FIGHT THEM--FOR THE SAKE --AND THE LOVE--OF YOU. WE WILL SURVIVE--AND TRIUMPH!
IKARIS--!

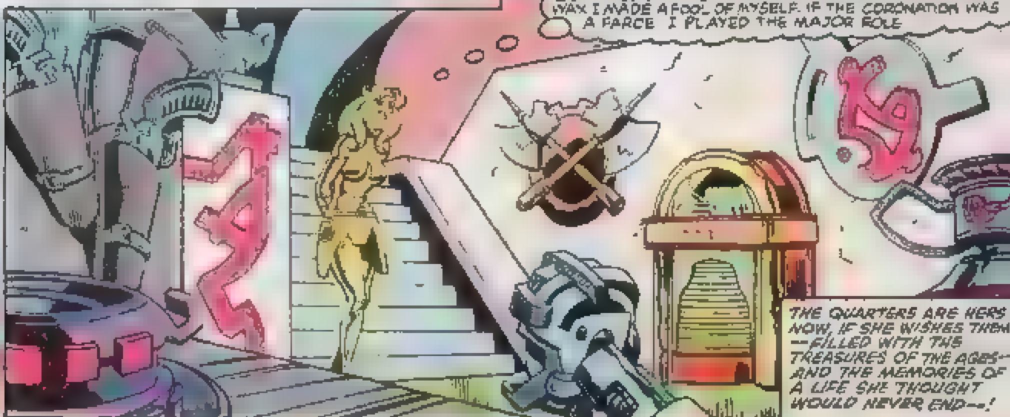

AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I STILL-- I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE THAT SOMEONE LIKE YOU COULD POSSIBLY--
POSSIBLY?

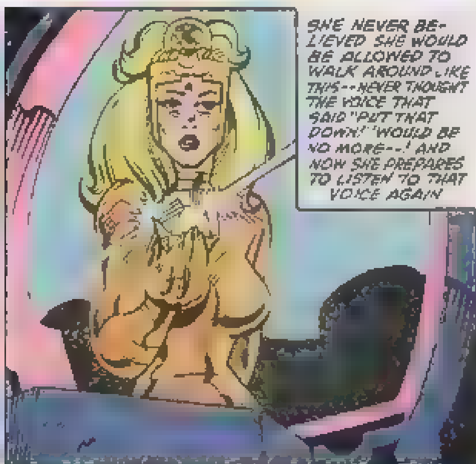

--COULD POSSIBLY LOVE SOMEONE LIKE ME
DON'T SELL YOURSELF SHORT, MARGO DAMIAN

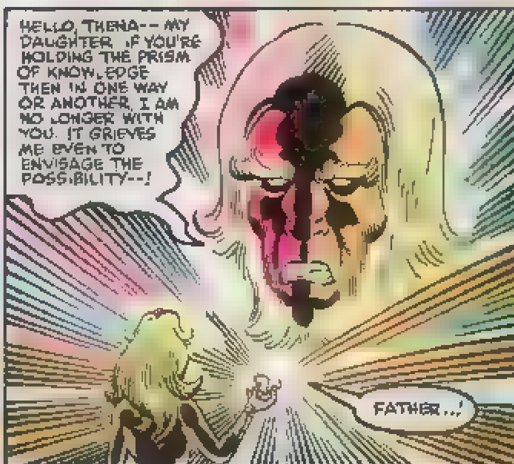

I MEAN--YOU'RE IMMORTAL, [redacted] CAN LEVITATE AND YOU HAVE ALL THESE OTHER POWERS AND I'M JUST A COLLEGE PROFESSOR'S DAUGHTER--!

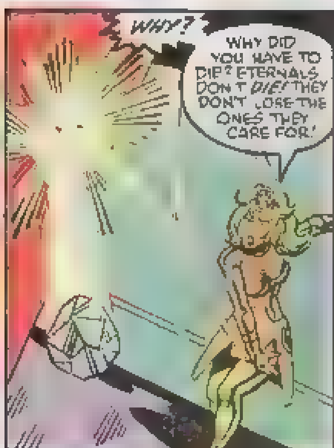

EXIT
LOVE CHOOSES ITS OWN PATH AND ITS OWN TIME MARGO --AND YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE AN ETERNAL TO HAVE LEARNED THAT
I KNOW-- IT'S JUST...

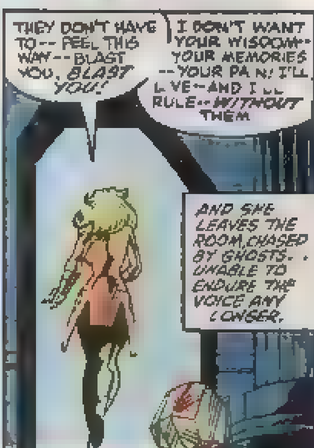

...IT'S JUST THAT IT SEEMS SO UNREAL SOMETIMES--!

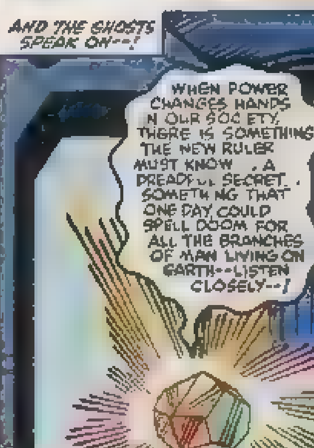












NEXT ISSUE: WARLORD KRO-- AND ONE OTHER! BE HERE!

A SPECIAL ETERNALS BONUS FEATURE!

THE THREE FACES OF MAN!

OR, "THE ETERNALS, DEVIANTS AND HUMANS, AND HOW THEY GREW." AN EXCERPT FROM THE LECTURES OF DR. SAM HOLDEN.

IT WAS RECENTLY REVEALED TO HUMANKIND THAT THEY SHARE THE PLANET EARTH WITH TWO VARIATIONS OF THEMSELVES:



THE GENETICALLY-UNSTABLE DEVIANT...

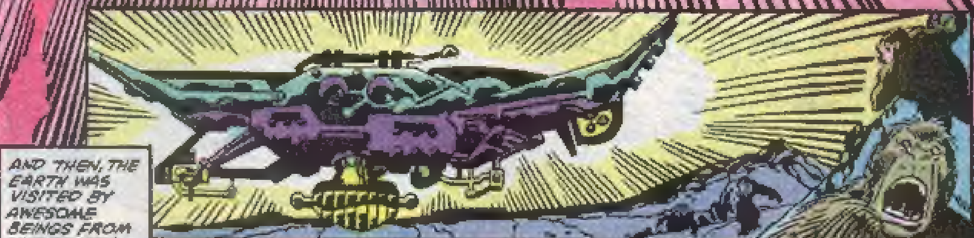




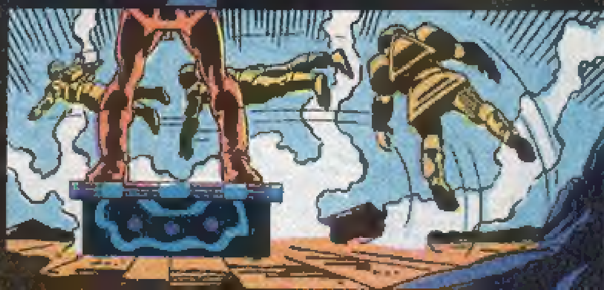
...AND THE IMMORTAL ETERNAL.



IN THE BEGINNING, HOWEVER, MANY CENTURIES AGO, THERE WERE ONLY SAVAGE ANTHROPOIDS, STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL.

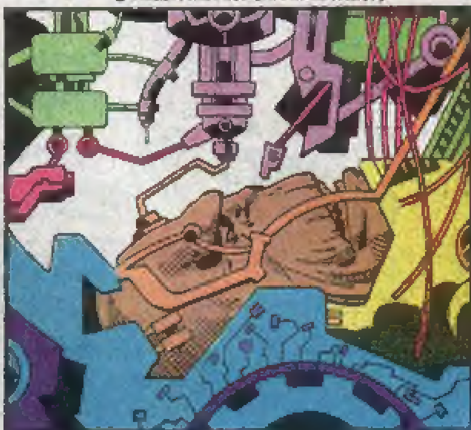


AND THEN, THE EARTH WAS VISITED BY AWESOME BEINGS FROM THE DEPTHS OF SPACE... THE FIRST HOST OF THE UNIMAGINABLE CELESTIALS.

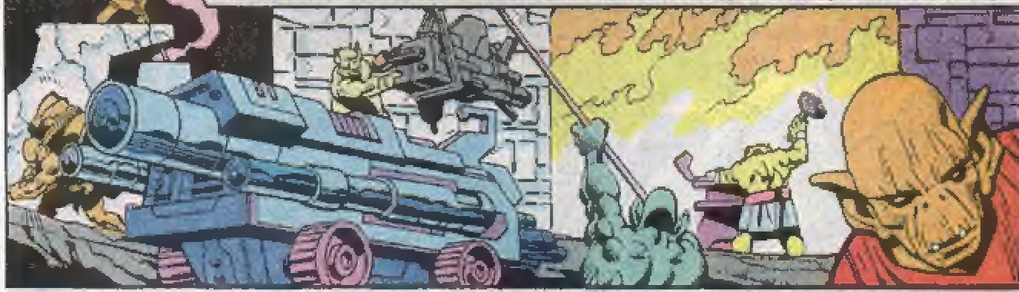


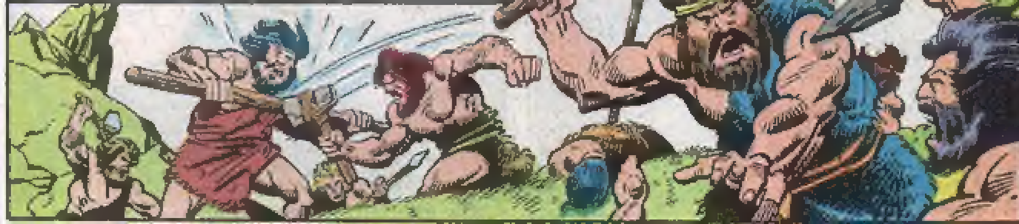
THE THOUSAND-FOOT-TALL SPACE GODS LEFT THEIR SHIP, AND RANGED OVER THE WORLD IN THEIR TASK.

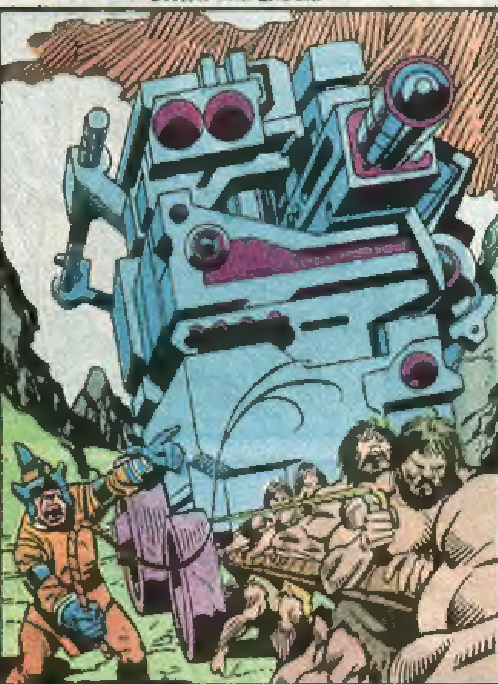

THEIR PURPOSE ON THIS PLANET WAS TO GATHER A FEW OF THE BRUTISH PROTO-HUMANS--


--AND SUBJECT THEIR GENETIC STRUCTURES TO PROCESSES BEYOND THE SCIENCE OF ANY LESSER RACE, THEREBY STIMULATING AND ALTERING THEIR EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT.


FOR REASONS KNOWN ONLY TO THE SPACE GODS, THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST HOST'S WORK WERE TWO OFFSHOOTS OF HUMANITY.
THE FIRST WAS THE ADVANCED AND POWERFUL ETERNALS, WHO SOUGHT THE SOLITUDE OF THE MOUNTAINTOPS, AND THERE IN THEIR SECLUDED CITY, THE ETERNALS PERFORMED A STRANGE EXPERIMENT THAT BROUGHT FORTH THE IMMORTALITY LATENT IN THEIR GENES.


AND THE SECOND WAS THE RACE OF DEVIANTS, WHO, THOUGH SCORNED AND MISSHAPEN, MASTERED THE SECRETS OF NATURE AND UTILIZED THEM IN THE CREATION OF MONSTROUS MACHINES OF WAR.


AND AS THESE TWO GENETICALLY STIMULATED GROUPS REPRODUCED AND PURSUED THEIR SEPARATE DESTINIES... THE NATURALLY EVOLVING PRIMATES BECAME PRIMITIVE MAN, WHO STRUGGLED FOR FOOD, SHELTER AND TERRITORY IN THAT LONG CLIMB TOWARD PRESENT DAY.


HOWEVER, LONG BEFORE HUMAN HISTORY WAS RECORDED, THE AMBITIOUS DEVIANTS ENSLAVED THEIR MORE PRIMITIVE BROTHER HUMANS AND BUILT EMPIRES ON THEIR SWEAT AND LABOR.


SOON THE DEVIANTS HAD GROUND THE WHOLE EARTH BENEATH THEIR FEET, AND TURNED THEIR EYES, THEIR POWER -- AND THE BURNING BITTERNESS OVER THEIR GENETIC INSTABILITY -- TOWARDS THE STARS THEMSELVES.


BUT THE CELESTIALS RETURNED -- AND THE SECOND HOST OF THE SPACE GODS BROUGHT CHASTISEMENT TO THE WORLD-CONQUERING DEVIANTS.


WITHIN THE BLINK OF AN EYE THE CELESTIALS HAD CRUSHED THE EMPIRE BUILT BY THIS SECOND BRANCH OF MAN.


THE DEVIANTS' CONTINENT OF LEMURIA SANK ENTIRELY BENEATH THE OCEAN, DESTROYING NINE-TENTHS OF THE DEVIANT RACE AND LOSING SECRETS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN RECOVERED IN TENS OF THOUSANDS OF YEARS.


ONLY A FEW HUMANS, PERHAPS THROUGH A SECRET FRIENDSHIP WITH THE SOLITARY ETERNALS, ESCAPED THE CONTINENT'S DESTRUCTION--


--AND EVENTUALLY WERE CAST UPON NEW SHORES, BEARING WITH THEM THE MEMORIES OF HORRIBLE DEMONS AND RESCUING GODS--AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.


IN THE AGES THAT FOLLOWED, HUMANKIND PROGRESSED--AND FROM TIME TO TIME CAUGHT GLIMPSES OF THE ETERNALS, MISTAKING THEM FOR DIVINE BEINGS.


AND BENEATH THE EARTH, BENEATH THE SEA-BEDS, THE DEVIANTS REBUILT IN DIMINISHED FORM, THEIR POWER-HUNGRY CIVILIZATION, WORKING WITH GRIM INTENSITY, BLACK VENGEFULNESS, AND FEAR...


...FOR IT WAS ALWAYS BELIEVED BY THEM THAT THE CELESTIALS WERE NOT FINISHED WITH EARTH--
--AND ONE DAY, NO ONE KNEW WHEN, THEY WOULD RETURN.
AND THAT DAY IS THE PRESENT.